インノサン少年十字軍

古屋兎丸

太田出版

LA CROISADE DES INNOCENTS

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上

COMICS

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The Story Until Now

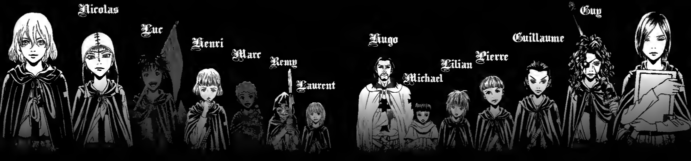
In 1212, at a small village in Northern France, Étienne, God's chosen child, and his 12 companions formed a Children's Crusade and headed for Jerusalem.

At first, the journey appeared to progress smoothly under the guidance of Hugo and the Knights Templar, but their trust in Hugo was ill-placed, as his betrayal set the foundation for their ruin.

The Forest of Demons took Luc's life, while Guillaume, Pierre, and Lilian were seduced away from the group by Hugo's lies.

As the children become more divided unto each other, what will lie at the end of their cruel journey?

Cast of Characters



Étienne: 12 years old. "God's chosen child." After receiving the horn of miracles from God, he leads the children to the Holy Land.

Nicolas: 12 years old. Commander of the Children's Crusade. He strongly wishes to become a true knight. He was deeply shaken by Hugo's betrayal and now seeks revenge.

Luc: 14 years old. Corporal. A reliable and cheerful boy. He was killed by bandits sent by Hugo.

Henri: 10 years old. Vice-commander. A weak-willed crybaby. In his desire to be recognized as a knight by Nicolas, he kills Marc.

Marc: 13 years old. Lance-corporal. A ventriloquist who often makes conversations with his puppet Leonardo. He was killed by Henri after trying to run away.

Remy: 12 years old. Once the most beautiful boy in the village, he contracted leprosy and became disfigured. He sets out for the Holy Land in search for a cure.

Laurent: 11 years old. The older twin. He and his twin brother Lilian can communicate telepathically.

Hugo: Leader of a Knights Templar branch. He fabricated Étienne's miracles to make money. Using initiation rites as an excuse, he forced Lilian, Pierre, and Guillaume into having sex.

Michael: 12 years old. A monk-in-training for the Cistercian Order. He appears to be airheaded but possesses an angelic voice.

Lilian: 11 years old. The younger twin brother. Jealousy towards his brother Laurent led him to associate with Guillaume and Pierre, becoming emotionally distant to his twin brother in process.

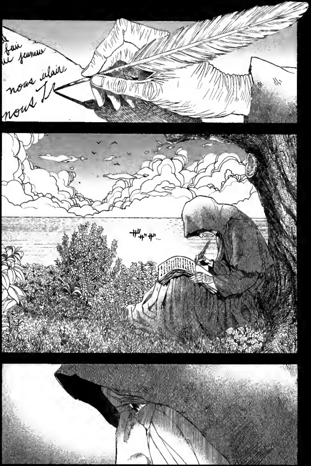
Pierre: 11 years old. Guillaume's lackey. He too has betrayed the Children's Crusade and become Hugo's pawn.

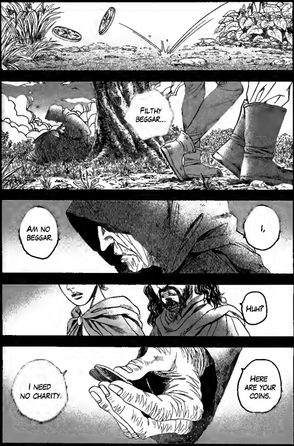
Guillaume: 12 years old. The son of a manor lord. He's excessively proud and often does whatever he pleases with little regards to others. He recently betrayed the Children's Crusade and became Hugo's pawn.

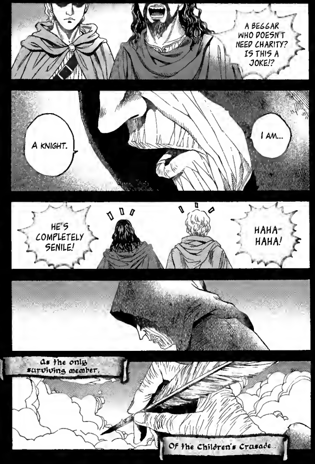
Guy: 14 years old. A former bandit who attacked the children's village, but after being spared by Étienne, he decides to join the Crusade. Although he looks tough, he's very soft-hearted to the weak.

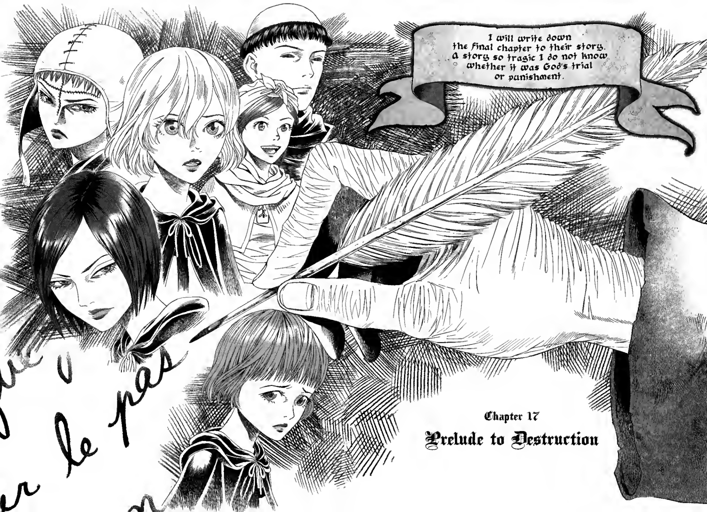
Christian: 14 years old. The 'brain' of the Children's Crusade. Possessing a wealth of knowledge, he believes in reason and logic more than God.

【初出】
「マンガ・エロティクス・エフ」
2010年vol.61〜2011年vol.72


fair
ue jeunesse
nous éclaire
nous T

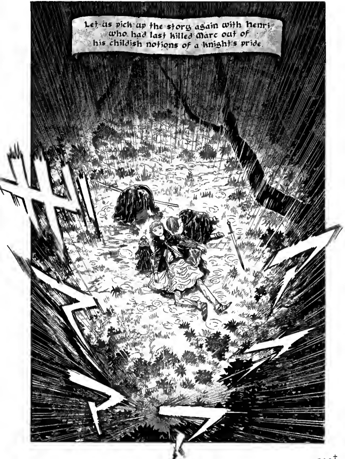

Filthy beggar...
I,
Am no beggar.
Huh?
Here are your coins.
I need no charity.

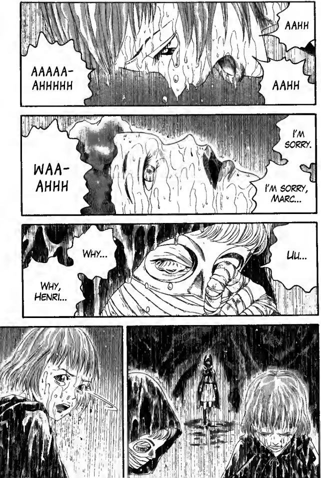

A BEGGAR WHO DOESN'T NEED CHARITY? IS THIS A JOKE!?
I AM...
A KNIGHT.
HAHA-HAHA!
HE'S COMPLETELY SENILE!
As the only surviving member,
Of the Children's Crusade.

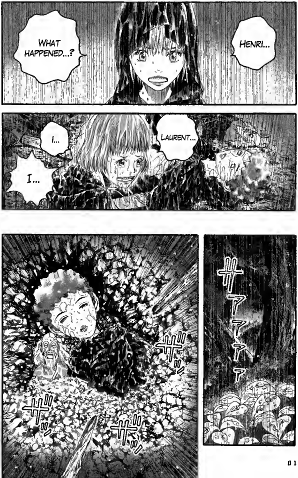

I will write down
the final chapter to their story.
A story so tragic I do not know
whether it was God's trial
or punishment.
le pas

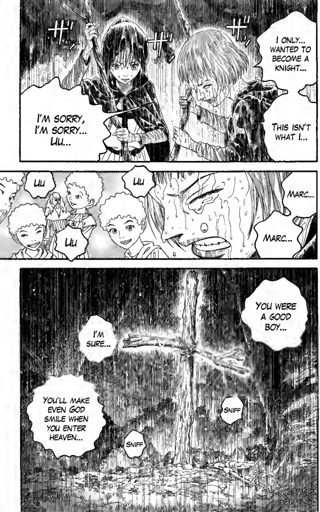
Chapter 17

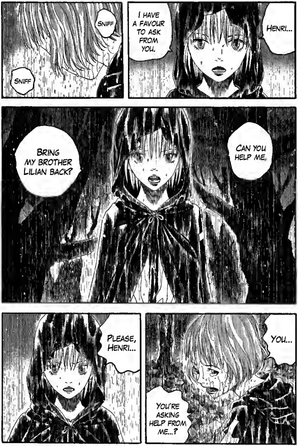
Prelude to Destruction

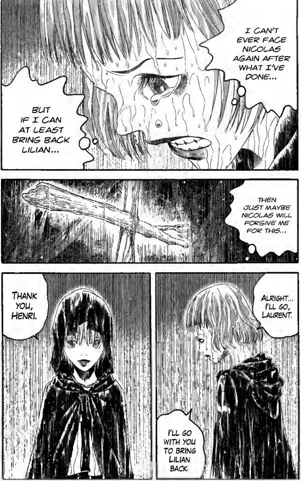

Let us pick up the story again with Henri, who had last killed Marc out of his childish notions of a knight's pride.

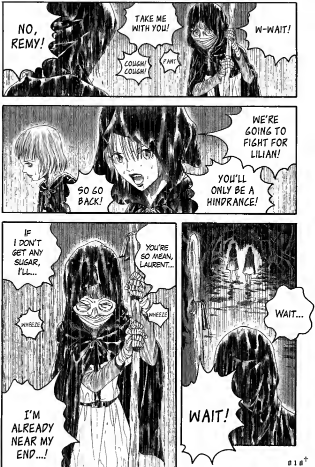

AAHH
AAHH
AAAAA-AHHHHH
I'M SORRY.
I'M SORRY, MARC...
WAA-AHHH
UU...
WHY...
WHY, HENRI...

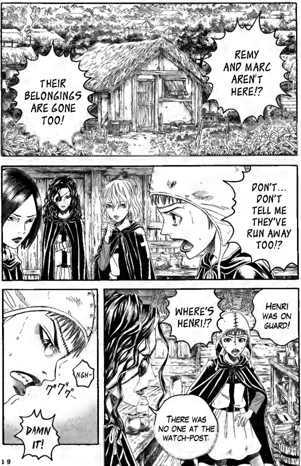

Henri...
What happened...?
Laurent...
I...
I...
サァァァァ
ザッ
ザッ
ザッ

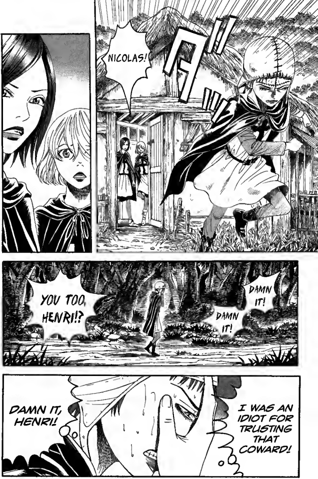

ザッ
I ONLY... WANTED TO BECOME A KNIGHT...
THIS ISN'T WHAT I...
ザッ
ザッ
I'M SORRY, I'M SORRY... UU...
MARC...
MARC...
UU
UU
UU
YOU WERE A GOOD BOY...
I'M SURE...
YOU'LL MAKE EVEN GOD SMILE WHEN YOU ENTER HEAVEN...
SNIFF
SNIFF

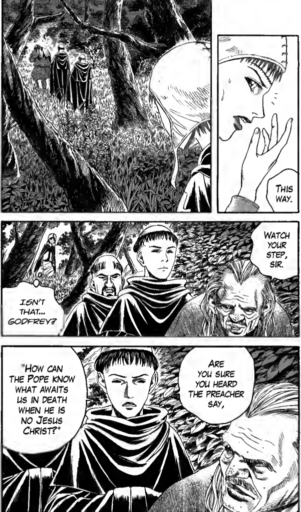

Henri...
I have a favour to ask from you.
Sniff
Sniff
Can you help me.
Bring my brother Lilian back?
You...
You're asking help from me..?
Please, Henri...

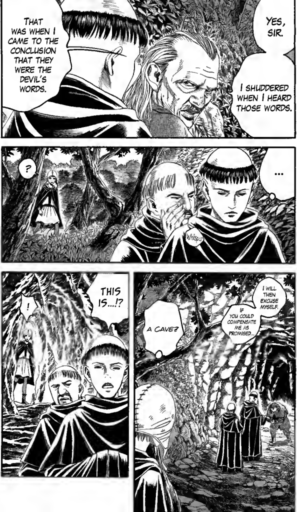

I CAN'T EVER FACE NICOLAS AGAIN AFTER WHAT I'VE DONE...
BUT IF I CAN AT LEAST BRING BACK LILIAN...
THEN JUST MAYBE NICOLAS WILL FORGIVE ME FOR THIS...
ALRIGHT... I'LL GO, LAURENT.
I'LL GO WITH YOU TO BRING LILIAN BACK.
THANK YOU, HENRI.

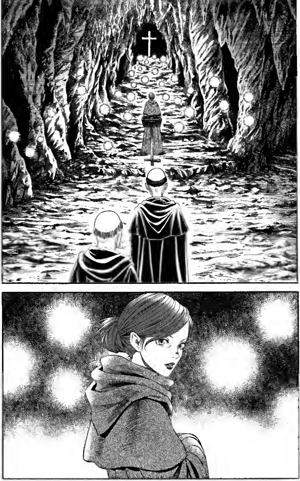

W-WAIT!
PANT
COUGH! COUGH!
TAKE ME WITH YOU!
NO, REMY!
WE'RE GOING TO FIGHT FOR LILIAN!
YOU'LL ONLY BE A HINDRANCE!
SO GO BACK!
YOU'RE SO MEAN, LAURENT...
IF I DON'T GET ANY SUGAR, I'LL...
WHEEZE
WHEEZE
I'M ALREADY NEAR MY END...!
WAIT...
WAIT!

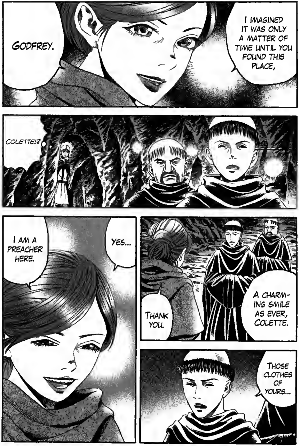

REMY AND MARC AREN'T HERE!?
THEIR BELONGINGS ARE GONE TOO!
DON'T... DON'T TELL ME THEY'VE RUN AWAY TOO!?
HENRI WAS ON GUARD!
WHERE'S HENRI!?
THERE WAS NO ONE AT THE WATCH-POST.
NGH-
グググ...
DAMN IT!

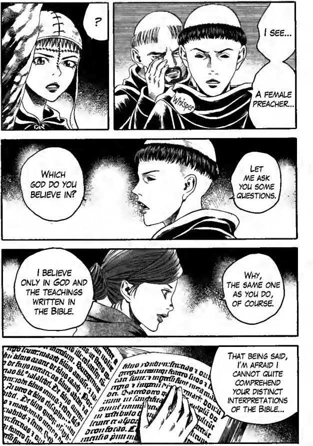

ダッ
NICOLAS!
YOU TOO, HENRI!?
DAMN IT!
DAMN IT!
I WAS AN IDIOT FOR TRUSTING THAT COWARD!
DAMN IT, HENRI!

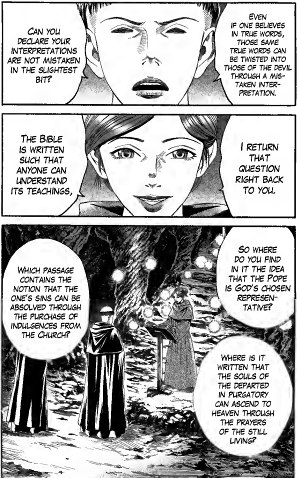

THIS WAY.
WATCH YOUR STEP, SIR.
ISN'T THAT... GODFREY?
ARE YOU SURE YOU HEARD THE PREACHER SAY,
"HOW CAN THE POPE KNOW WHAT AWAITS US IN DEATH WHEN HE IS NO JESUS CHRIST?"

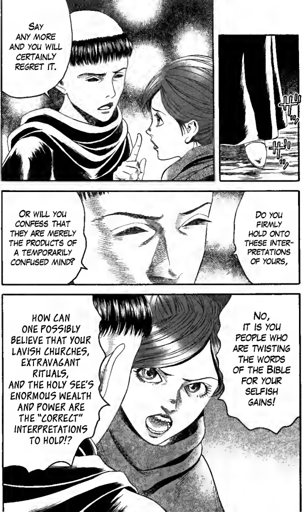

YES, SIR.
I SHUDDERED WHEN I HEARD THOSE WORDS.
THAT WAS WHEN I CAME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT THEY WERE THE DEVIL'S WORDS.
...
Whisper
?
I WILL THEN EXCUSE MYSELF.
IF YOU COULD COMPENSATE ME AS PROMISED...
A CAVE?
THIS IS...!?
!

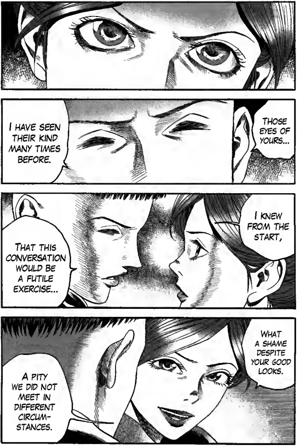


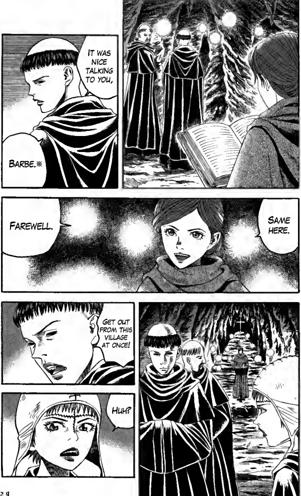

I IMAGINED IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME UNTIL YOU FOUND THIS PLACE,
GODFREY.
COLETTE!?
A CHARMING SMILE AS EVER, COLETTE.
THANK YOU.
YES...
I AM A PREACHER HERE.
THOSE CLOTHES OF YOURS...


Whisper
I SEE...
A FEMALE PREACHER...
?
LET ME ASK YOU SOME QUESTIONS.
WHICH GOD DO YOU BELIEVE IN?
WHY, THE SAME ONE AS YOU DO, OF COURSE.
I BELIEVE ONLY IN GOD AND THE TEACHINGS WRITTEN IN THE BIBLE.
THAT BEING SAID, I'M AFRAID I CANNOT QUITE COMPREHEND YOUR DISTINCT INTERPRETATIONS OF THE BIBLE...

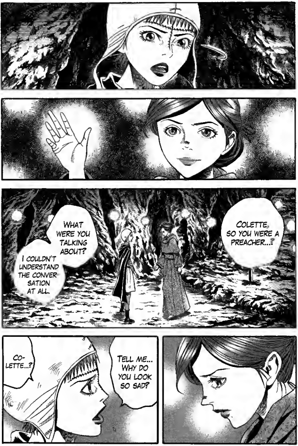

Even if one believes in true words, those same true words can be twisted into those of the devil through a mistaken interpretation.
Can you declare your interpretations are not mistaken in the slightest bit?
I return that question right back to you.
The Bible is written such that anyone can understand its teachings,
So where do you find in it the idea that the Pope is God's chosen representative?
Which passage contains the notion that the one's sins can be absolved through the purchase of indulgences from the Church?
Where is it written that the souls of the departed in purgatory can ascend to heaven through the prayers of the still living?

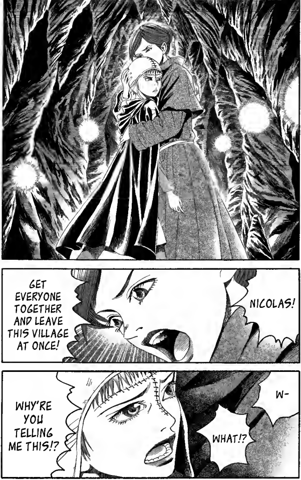

Say any more and you will certainly regret it.
Do you firmly hold onto these interpretations of yours,
Or will you confess that they are merely the products of a temporarily confused mind?
No, it is you people who are twisting the words of the Bible for your selfish gains!
How can one possibly believe that your lavish churches, extravagant rituals, and the Holy See's enormous wealth and power are the "correct" interpretations to hold!?

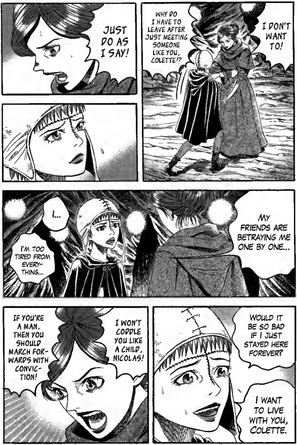

THOSE EYES OF YOURS...
I HAVE SEEN THEIR KIND MANY TIMES BEFORE.
I KNEW FROM THE START,
THAT THIS CONVERSATION WOULD BE A FUTILE EXERCISE...
WHAT A SHAME DESPITE YOUR GOOD LOOKS.
A PITY WE DID NOT MEET IN DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCES.

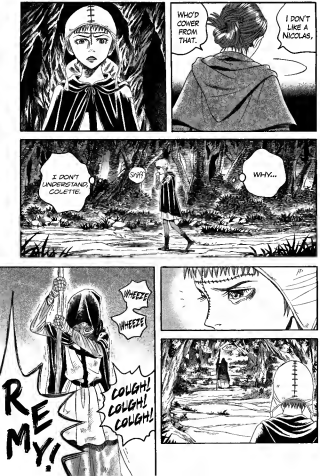

It was nice talking to you,
Barbe.※
Same here.
Farewell.
Get out from this village at once!
Huh?

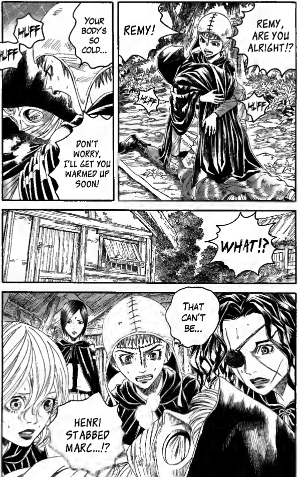
※ Barbe, meaning 'beard' in French, was a common nickname for Waldensian preachers

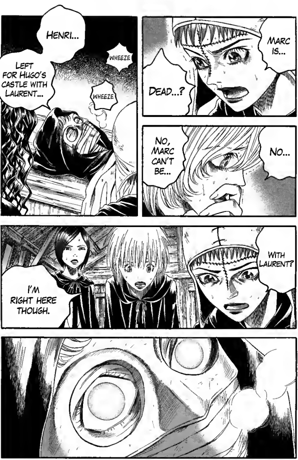

COLETTE, SO YOU WERE A PREACHER...?
WHAT WERE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
I COULDN'T UNDERSTAND THE CONVER SATION AT ALL.
TELL ME... WHY DO YOU LOOK SO SAD?
CO-LETTE...?

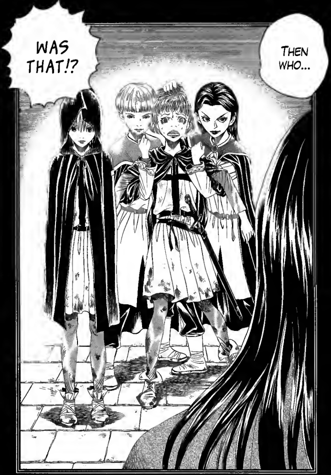

NICOLAS!
GET EVERYONE TOGETHER AND LEAVE THIS VILLAGE AT ONCE!
W-
WHAT!?
WHY'RE YOU TELLING ME THIS!?

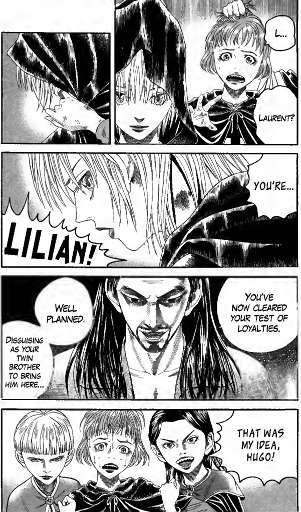

I DON'T WANT TO!
WHY DO I HAVE TO LEAVE AFTER JUST MEETING SOMEONE LIKE YOU, COLETTE!?
JUST DO AS I SAY!
MY FRIENDS ARE BETRAYING ME ONE BY ONE...
I...
I'M TOO TIRED FROM EVERYTHING...
WOULD IT BE SO BAD IF I JUST STAYED HERE FOREVER?
I WANT TO LIVE WITH YOU, COLETTE.
I WON'T CODDLE YOU LIKE A CHILD, NICOLAS!
IF YOU'RE A MAN, THEN YOU SHOULD MARCH FORWARDS WITH CONVICTION!

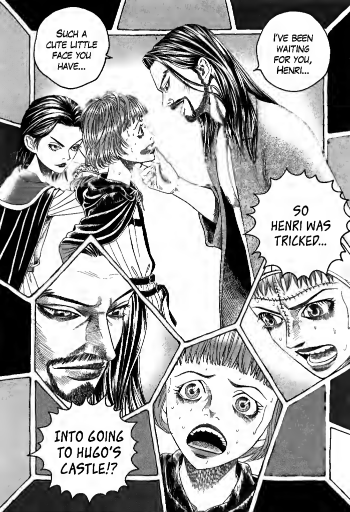

I DON'T LIKE A NICOLAS,
WHO'D COWER FROM THAT.
WHY...
Sniff
I DON'T UNDERSTAND, COLETTE.
WHEEZE
WHEEZE
COUGH! COUGH! COUGH!
REMY!


REMY, ARE YOU ALRIGHT!?
REMY!
HUFF
HUFF
YOUR BODY'S SO COLD...
HUFF
HUFF
DON'T WORRY, I'LL GET YOU WARMED UP SOON!
WHAT!?
THAT CAN'T BE...
HENRI STABBED MARC...!?


Marc is...
Dead...?
No...
No, Marc can't be...
Henri...
Wheeze
Left for Hugo's castle with Laurent...
Wheeze
With Laurent?
I'm right here though.

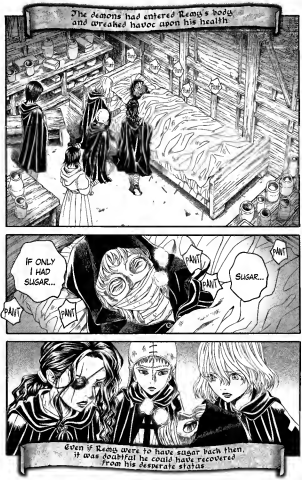

THEN WHO...
WAS THAT!?

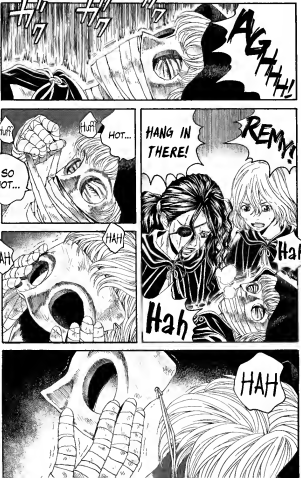

L...
LAURENT?
YOU'RE...
LILIAN!
WELL PLANNED.
DISGUISING AS YOUR TWIN BROTHER TO BRING HIM HERE...
YOU'VE NOW CLEARED YOUR TEST OF LOYALTIES.
THAT WAS MY IDEA, HUGO!

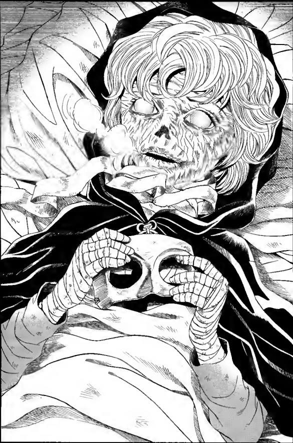

I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU, HENRI...
SUCH A CUTE LITTLE FACE YOU HAVE...
SO HENRI WAS TRICKED...
INTO GOING TO HUGO'S CASTLE!?

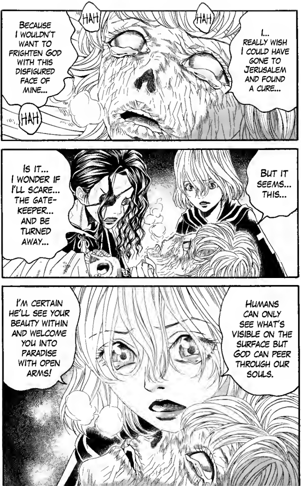
Chapter 18

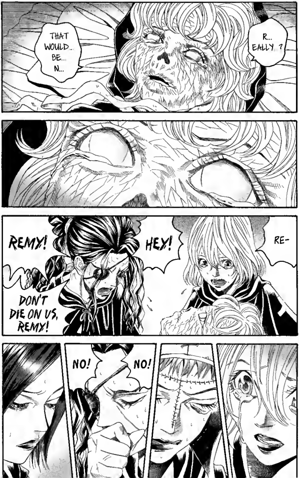
Underneath the Mask

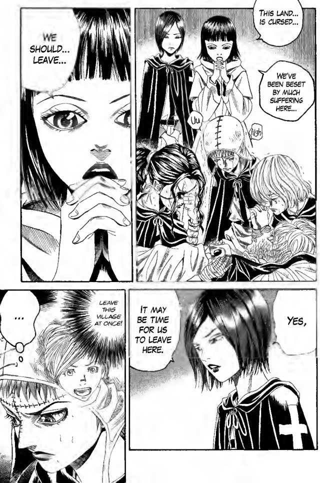

The demons had entered Remy's body and wreaked havoc upon his health.
Pant
Pant
Pant
Pant
Pant
Pant
If only I had sugar...
Pant
Pant
Pant
Sugar...
Pant
Pant
Even if Remy were to have sugar back then, it was doubtful he could have recovered from his desperate status.

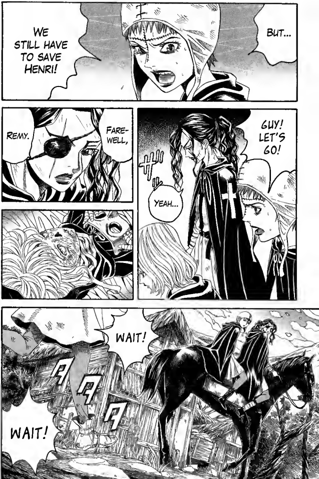

AGHHHH!
ガク
ガク
ガク
REMY!
HANG IN THERE!
Hah
Hah
HOT...
Huff
Huff
SO HOT...
HAH
HAH
HAH

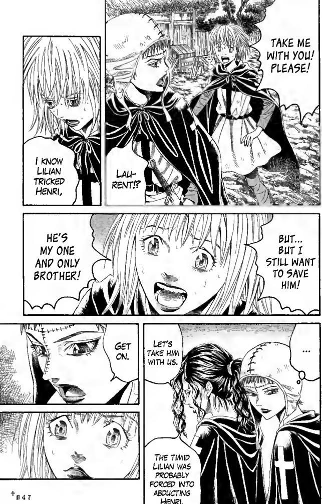


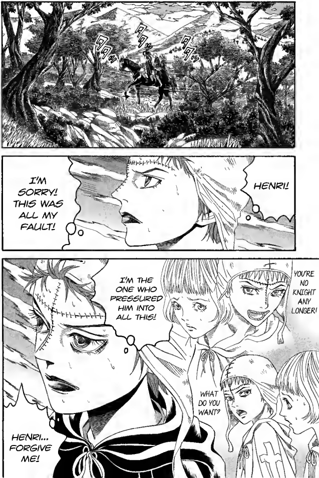

HAH
HAH
I... really wish I could have gone to Jerusalem and found a cure...
Because I wouldn't want to frighten God with this disfigured face of mine...
HAH
But it seems... this...
Is it... I wonder if I'll scare... the gate-keeper... and be turned away...
Humans can only see what's visible on the surface but God can peer through our souls.
I'm certain he'll see your beauty within and welcome you into paradise with open arms!

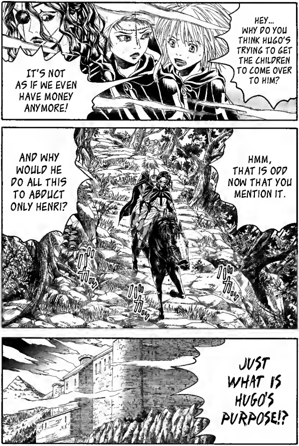

R... EALLY ?
THAT WOULD... BE... N...
RE-
HEY!
REMY!
DON'T DIE ON US, REMY!
NO!
NO!

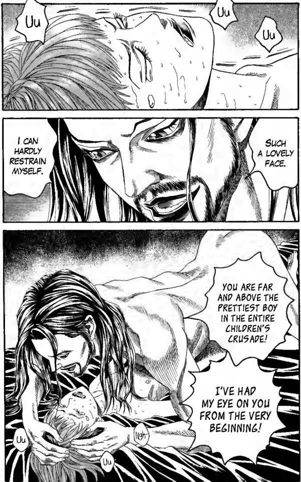

This land... is cursed...
We've been beset by much suffering here...
Uu
Ngh
We should... leave...
Yes,
It may be time for us to leave here.
Leave this village at once!
...

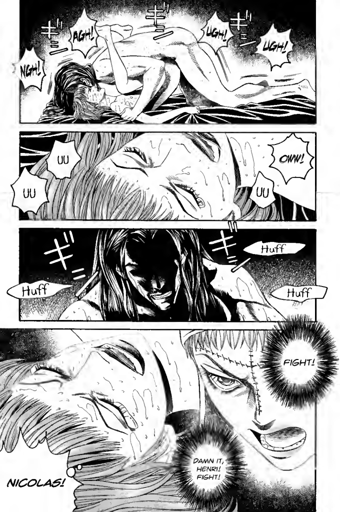

BUT...
WE STILL HAVE TO SAVE HENRI!
GUY! LET'S GO!
YEAH...
FAREWELL,
REMY.
WAIT!
WAIT!

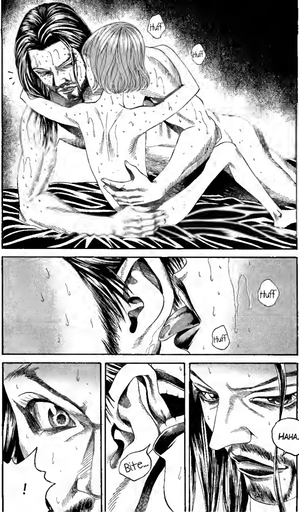

TAKE ME WITH YOU! PLEASE!
LAU-RENT!?
I KNOW LILIAN TRICKED HENRI,
BUT... BUT I STILL WANT TO SAVE HIM!
HE'S MY ONE AND ONLY BROTHER!
...
LET'S TAKE HIM WITH US.
THE TIMID LILIAN WAS PROBABLY FORCED INTO ABDUCTING HENRI.
GET ON.

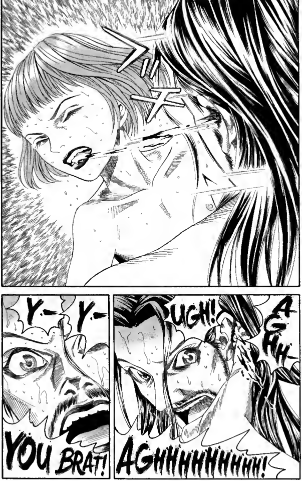

ダダッ
ダダッ
ダダッ
HENRI!
I'M SORRY! THIS WAS ALL MY FAULT!
YOU'RE NO KNIGHT ANY LONGER!
I'M THE ONE WHO PRESSURED HIM INTO ALL THIS!
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
HENRI... FORGIVE ME!

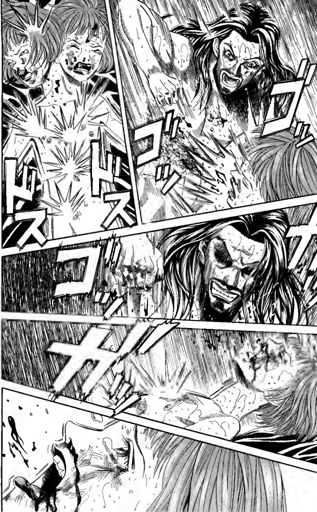

HEY... WHY DO YOU THINK HUGO'S TRYING TO GET THE CHILDREN TO COME OVER TO HIM?
IT'S NOT AS IF WE EVEN HAVE MONEY ANYMORE!
AND WHY WOULD HE DO ALL THIS TO ABDUCT ONLY HENRI?
HMM, THAT IS ODD NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT.
バカ…
バカ…
バカッ
JUST WHAT IS HUGO'S PURPOSE!?

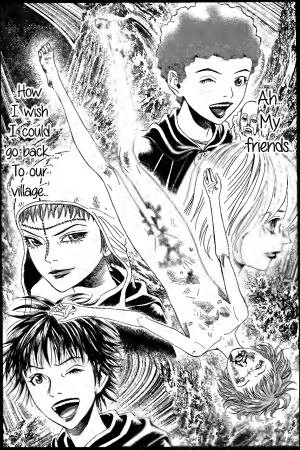

Uu
Uu
Uu
SUCH A LOVELY FACE.
I CAN HARDLY RESTRAIN MYSELF.
YOU ARE FAR AND ABOVE THE PRETTIEST BOY IN THE ENTIRE CHILDREN'S CRUSADE!
I'VE HAD MY EYE ON YOU FROM THE VERY BEGINNING!
Ngh
Uu
Uu

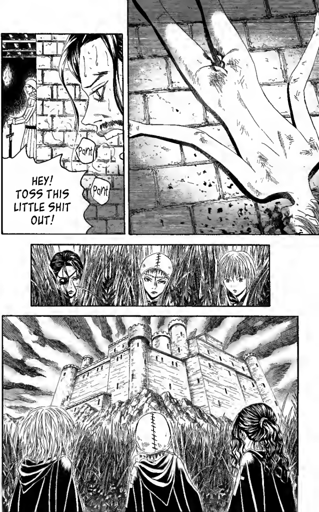

UGH!
ギ
UGH!
ギ
AGH!
ギ
NGH!
OWW!
UU
UU
UU
Huff
ギ
ギ
Huff
Huff
FIGHT!
DAMN IT, HENRI! FIGHT!
NICOLAS!

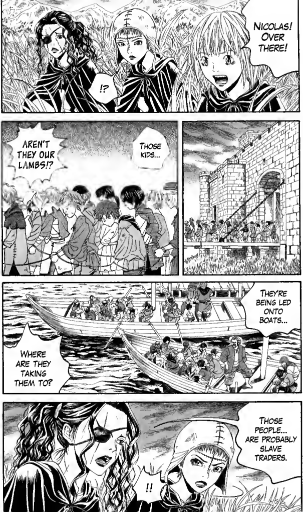

Huff
Huff
Huff
Huff
HAHA...
Bite...
!

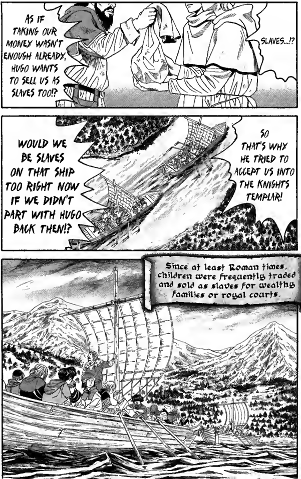

ブス
UGH!
AGHH-
AGHHHHHHHHH!
Y- Y-
YOU BRAT!

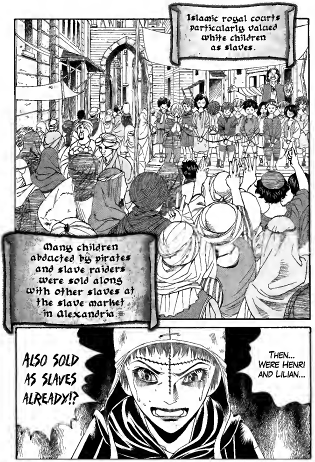

ゴッ
ゴッ
ドス
ドス
ゴッ
ガッ


Ah... My friends...
How I wish I could go back... To our village...

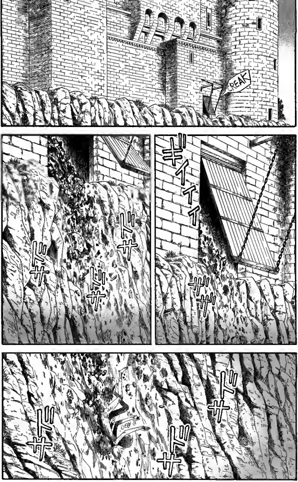

Pant
Pant
HEY! TOSS THIS LITTLE SHIT OUT!

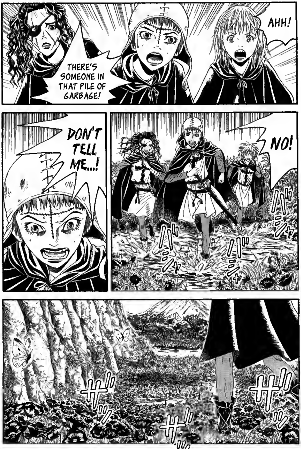

NICOLAS! OVER THERE!
!?
THOSE KIDS...
AREN'T THEY OUR LAMBS!?
THEY'RE BEING LED ONTO BOATS...
WHERE ARE THEY TAKING THEM TO?
THOSE PEOPLE... ARE PROBABLY SLAVE TRADERS.
!!

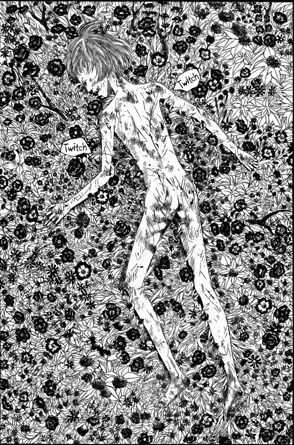

SLAVES...!?
AS IF TAKING OUR MONEY WASN'T ENOUGH ALREADY, HUGO WANTS TO SELL US AS SLAVES TOO!?
SO THAT'S WHY HE TRIED TO ACCEPT US INTO THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR!
WOULD WE BE SLAVES ON THAT SHIP TOO RIGHT NOW IF WE DIDN'T PART WITH HUGO BACK THEN!?
Since at least Roman times, children were frequently traded and sold as slaves for wealthy families or royal courts.

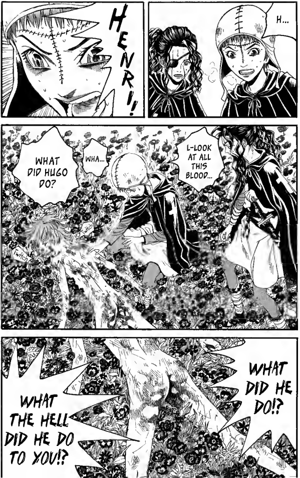

Islamic royal courts particularly valued white children as slaves.
Many children abducted by pirates and slave raiders were sold along with other slaves at the slave market in Alexandria ※
THEN... WERE HENRI AND LILIAN...
ALSO SOLD AS SLAVES ALREADY!?

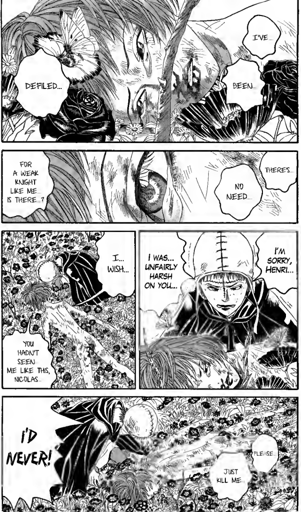
※ MANY NORMAN AND VENETIAN TRADERS SOLD SLAVS TO MUSLIMS DUE TO THIS.

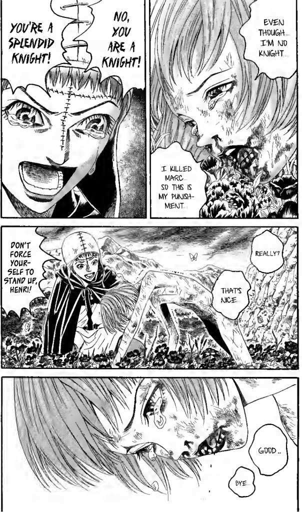

CREAK
ギイイイ
ザザ
ドサ
ドサ
ドサ
ドサ
ドサ
ドサ

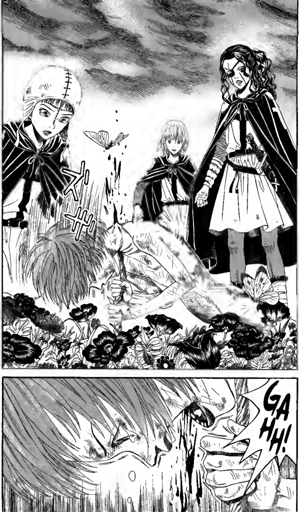

AHH!
THERE'S SOMEONE IN THAT PILE OF GARBAGE!
NO!
バシャ
バシャ
バシャ
DON'T TELL ME...!
ザッ
ザッ
ザッ

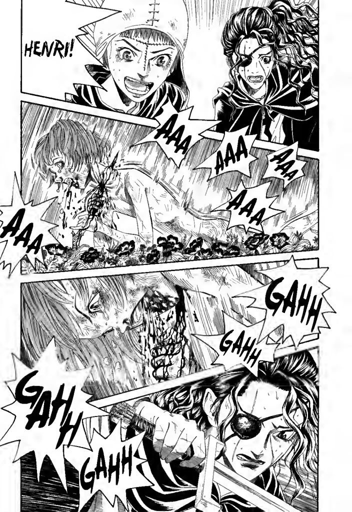

Twitch
Twitch

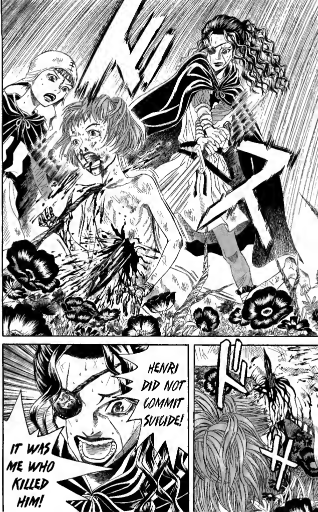

H...
HENRI!!
L-LOOK AT ALL THIS BLOOD...
WHA...
WHAT DID HUGO DO?
Twitch
Twitch
WHAT DID HE DO!?
WHAT THE HELL DID HE DO TO YOU!?

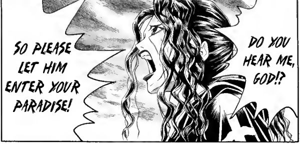

I'VE...
BEEN...
DEFILED...
THERE'S...
NO NEED...
FOR A WEAK KNIGHT LIKE ME... IS THERE ?
I'M SORRY, HENRI...
I WAS... UNFAIRLY HARSH ON YOU...
I... WISH...
YOU HADN'T SEEN ME LIKE THIS, NICOLAS...
PLEASE...
JUST KILL ME...
I'D NEVER!

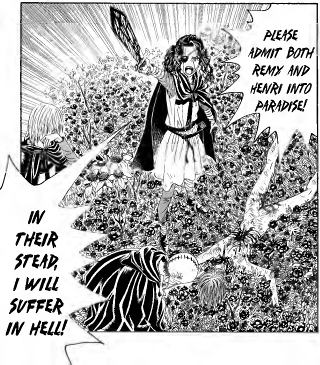

EVEN THOUGH... I'M NO KNIGHT...
I KILLED MARC... SO THIS IS MY PUNISHMENT...
NO, YOU ARE A KNIGHT!
YOU'RE A SPLENDID KNIGHT!
DON'T FORCE YOURSELF TO STAND UP, HENRI!
REALLY?
THAT'S NICE
GOOD..
BYE

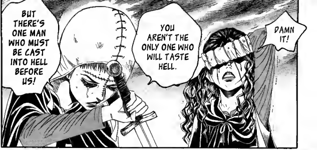

ズザ
GAHH!

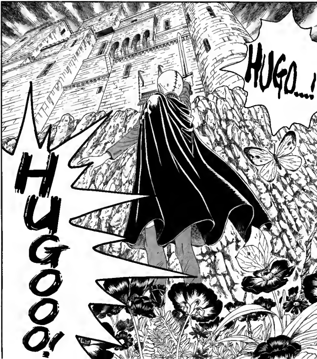

HENRI!
AAA
AAA
AAA
AAA
AAA
GAHH
GAHH
GAHH
GAHH


ドス
ドサ
HENRI DID NOT COMMIT SUICIDE!
IT WAS ME WHO KILLED HIM!


DO YOU HEAR ME, GOD!?
SO PLEASE LET HIM ENTER YOUR PARADISE!

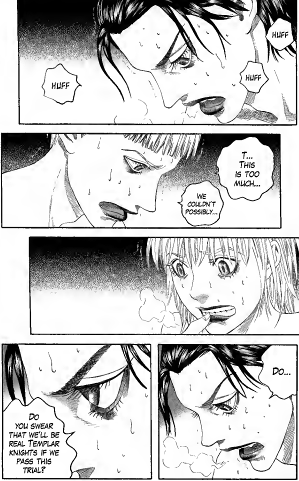

PLEASE ADMIT BOTH REMY AND HENRI INTO PARADISE!
IN THEIR STEAD, I WILL SUFFER IN HELL!

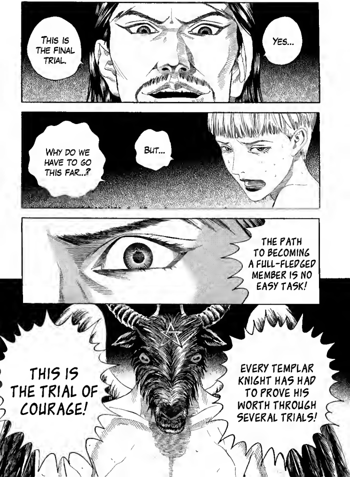

DAMN IT!
YOU AREN'T THE ONLY ONE WHO WILL TASTE HELL.
BUT THERE'S ONE MAN WHO MUST BE CAST INTO HELL BEFORE US!

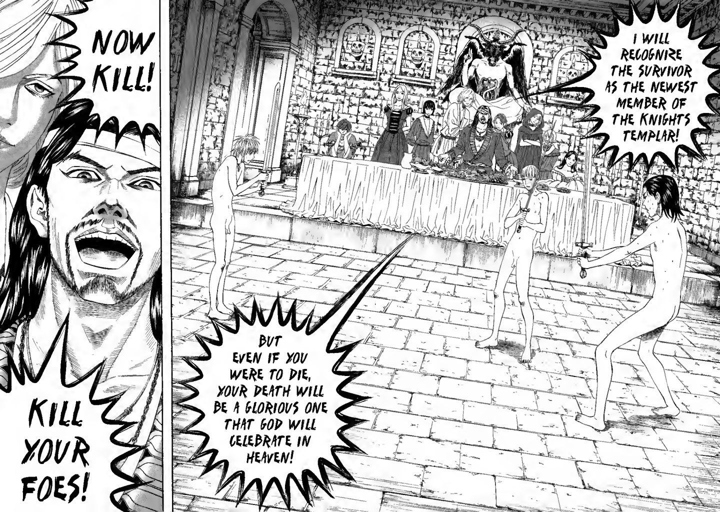

HUGO...!
HUGOOOO!

Chapter 19

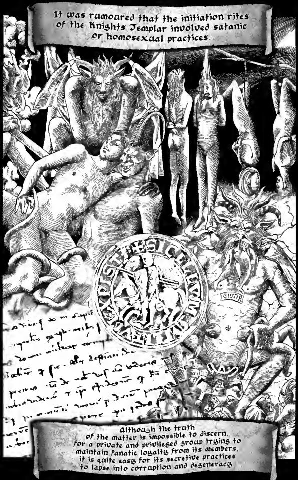
Divine Slaughter


HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
T... THIS IS TOO MUCH...
WE COULDN'T POSSIBLY...
DO...
DO YOU SWEAR THAT WE'LL BE REAL TEMPLAR KNIGHTS IF WE PASS THIS TRIAL?

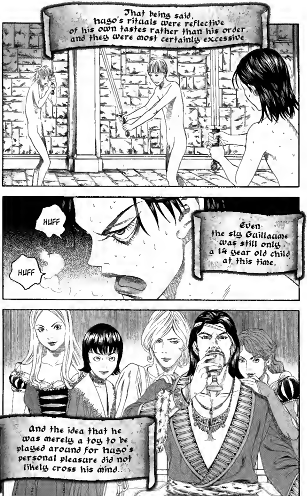

YES...
THIS IS THE FINAL TRIAL.
BUT...
WHY DO WE HAVE TO GO THIS FAR..?
THE PATH TO BECOMING A FULL-FLEDGED MEMBER IS NO EASY TASK!
EVERY TEMPLAR KNIGHT HAS HAD TO PROVE HIS WORTH THROUGH SEVERAL TRIALS!
THIS IS THE TRIAL OF COURAGE!

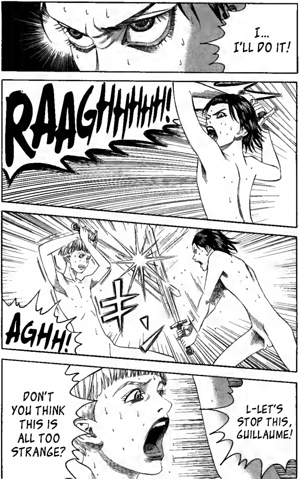

I WILL RECOGNIZE THE SURVIVOR AS THE NEWEST MEMBER OF THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR!
BUT EVEN IF YOU WERE TO DIE, YOUR DEATH WILL BE A GLORIOUS ONE THAT GOD WILL CELEBRATE IN HEAVEN!
NOW KILL!
KILL YOUR FOES!

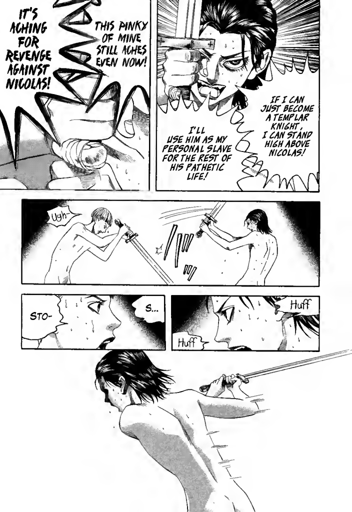
It was rumoured that the initiation rites of the Knights Templar involved satanic or homosexual practices.

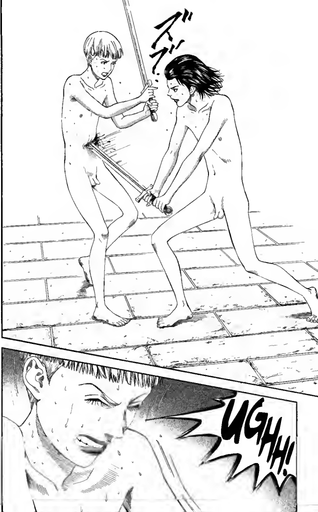


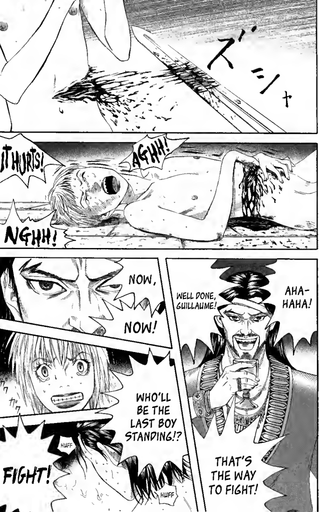
Although the truth of the matter is impossible to discern, for a private and privileged group trying to maintain fanatic loyalty from its members, it is quite easy for its secretive practices to lapse into corruption and degeneracy.

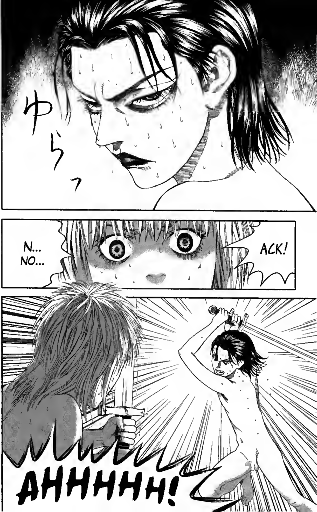

That being said, hugo's rituals were reflective of his own tastes rather than his order, and they were most certainly excessive
HUFF
HUFF
Even the sly Gaillaume was still only a 14 year old child at this time.
And the idea that he was merely a toy to be played around for hugo's personal pleasure did not likely cross his mind.

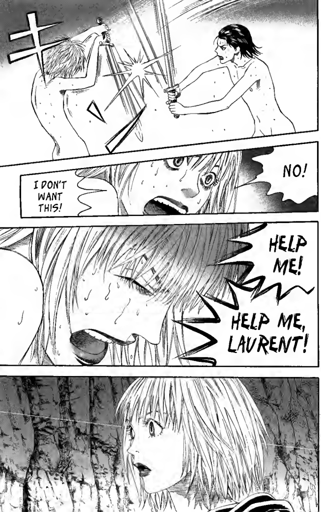

I... I'LL DO IT!
RAAGHHHHHH!
AGHH!
L-LET'S STOP THIS, GUILLAUME!
DON'T YOU THINK THIS IS ALL TOO STRANGE?

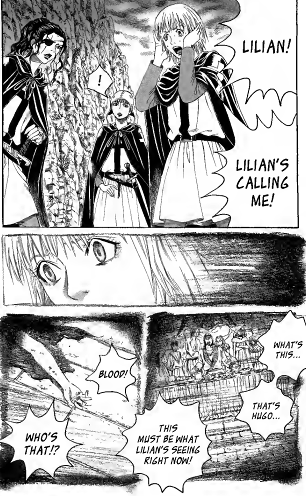

THIS PINKY OF MINE STILL ACHES EVEN NOW!
IT'S ACHING FOR REVENGE AGAINST NICOLAS!
IF I CAN JUST BECOME A TEMPLAR KNIGHT, I CAN STAND HIGH ABOVE NICOLAS!
I'LL USE HIM AS MY PERSONAL SLAVE FOR THE REST OF HIS PATHETIC LIFE!
Ugh-
STO-
S...
Huff
Huff

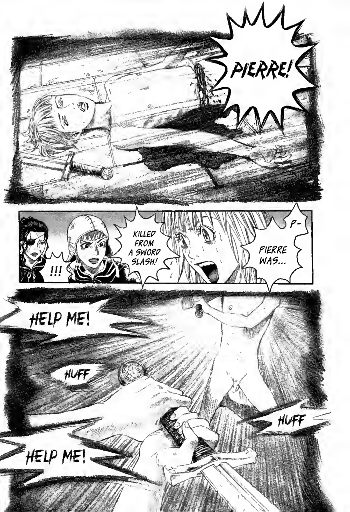

ズブ…
UGHH!

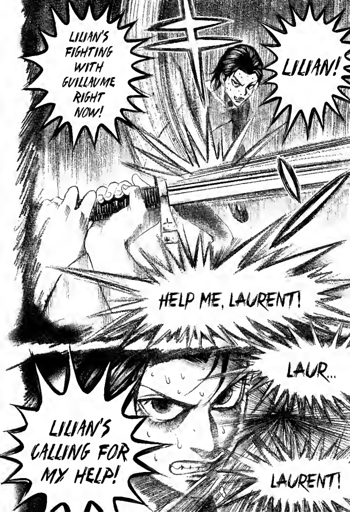

ズシャ
AGHH!
IT HURTS!
NGHH!
AHA-HAHA!
WELL DONE, GUILLAUME!
THAT'S THE WAY TO FIGHT!
NOW, NOW!
ガク ガク
WHO'LL BE THE LAST BOY STANDING!?
FIGHT!
HUFF
HUFF

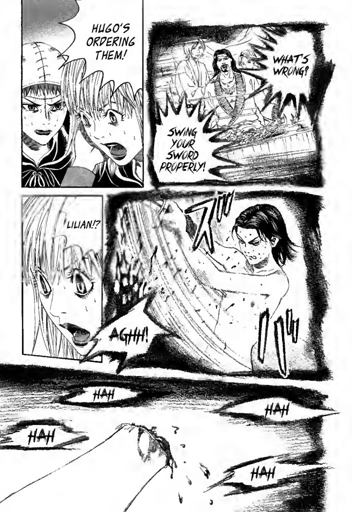

ゆらっ
ACK!
N... NO...
AHHHHH!

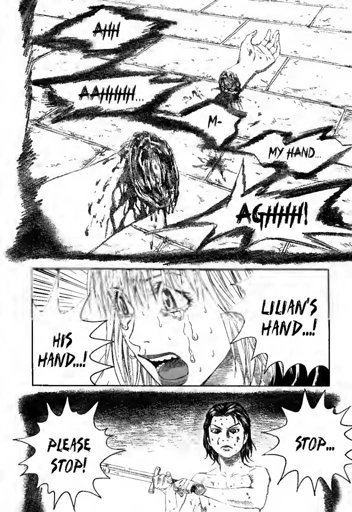

キ
NO!
I DON'T WANT THIS!
HELP ME!
HELP ME, LAURENT!

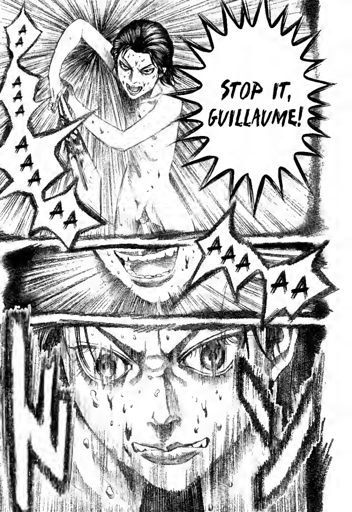

LILIAN!
!
LILIAN'S CALLING ME!
WHAT'S THIS...
THAT'S HUGO...
THIS MUST BE WHAT LILIAN'S SEEING RIGHT NOW!
BLOOD!
WHO'S THAT!?

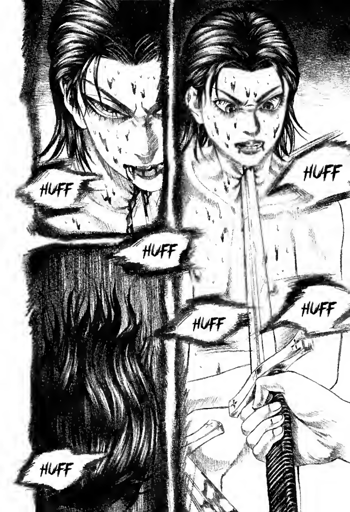

PIERRE!
P-
PIERRE WAS...
KILLED FROM A SWORD SLASH!
!!!
HELP ME!
HUFF
HUFF
HELP ME!

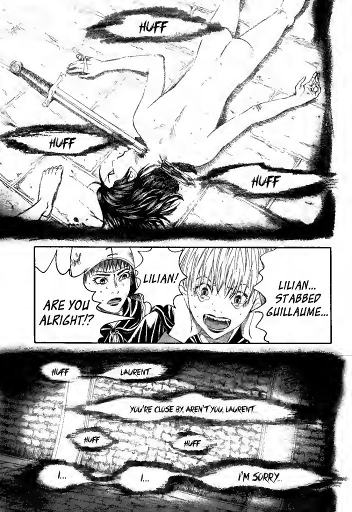

LILIAN!
LILIAN'S FIGHTING WITH GUILLAUME RIGHT NOW!
HELP ME, LAURENT!
LAUR...
LILIAN'S CALLING FOR MY HELP!
LAURENT!

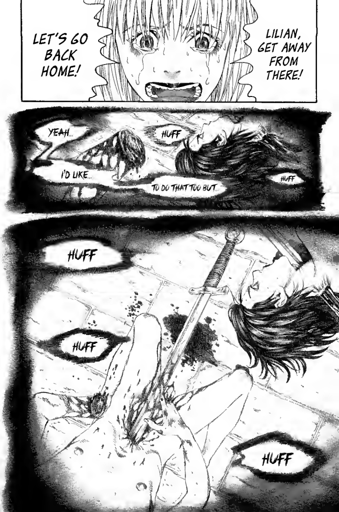

WHAT'S WRONG?
SWING YOUR SWORD PROPERLY!
HUGO'S ORDERING THEM!
AGHH!
LILIAN!?
HAH
HAH
HAH
HAH

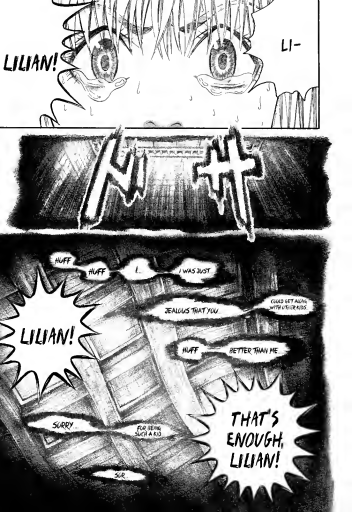

AHH
AAHHHH...
M-
MY HAND...
AGHHH!
HIS HAND...!
LILIAN'S HAND...!
PLEASE STOP!
STOP...

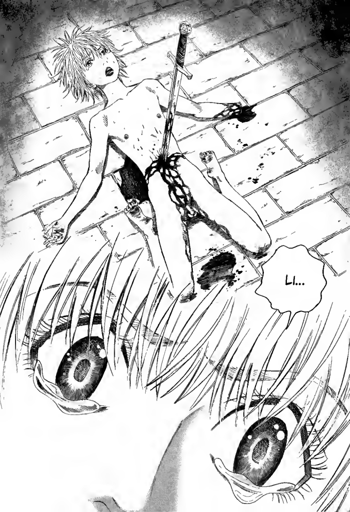

STOP IT, GUILLAUME!
AAAAAAAAA
AAAA

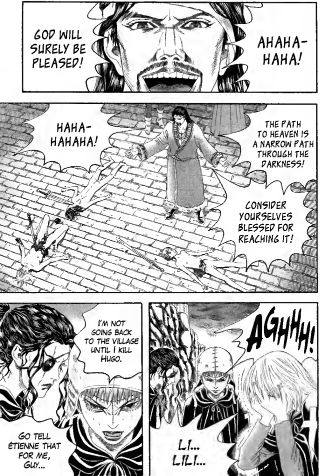

HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF

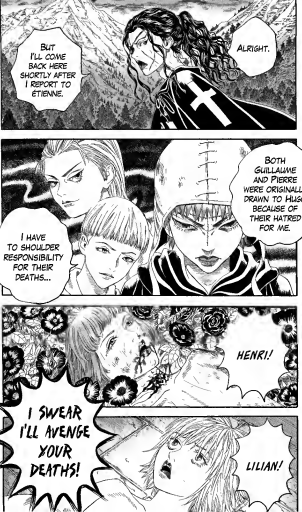

HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
LILIAN... STABBED GUILLAUME...
LILIAN!
ARE YOU ALRIGHT!?
HUFF
LAURENT
YOU'RE CLOSE BY, AREN'T YOU, LAURENT...
HUFF
HUFF
I...
I...
I'M SORRY...

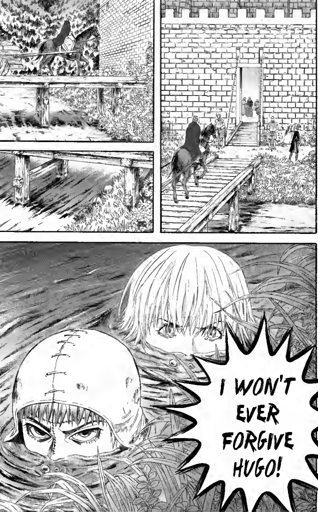

LILIAN, GET AWAY FROM THERE!
LET'S GO BACK HOME!
HUFF
HUFF
YEAH...
I'D LIKE...
TO DO THAT TOO BUT...
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF

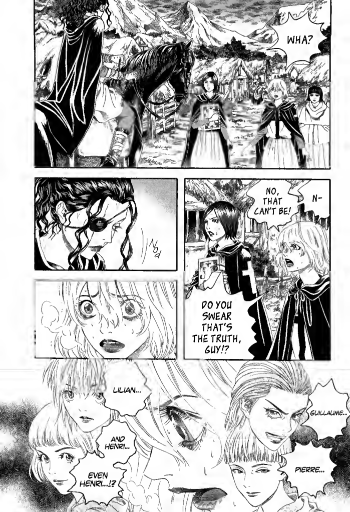

LILIAN!
LI-
HUFF
HUFF
I...
I WAS JUST...
JEALOUS THAT YOU...
COULD GET ALONG WITH OTHER KIDS...
LILIAN!
HUFF
BETTER THAN ME...
SORRY...
FOR BEING SUCH A KID
THAT'S ENOUGH, LILIAN!
SOR...

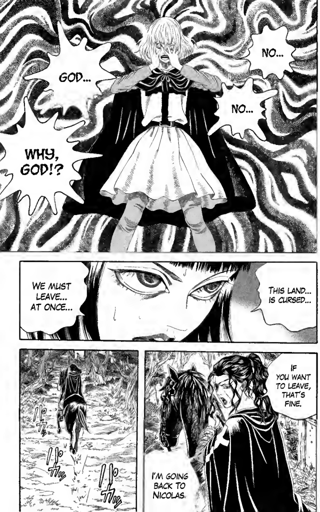

LI...

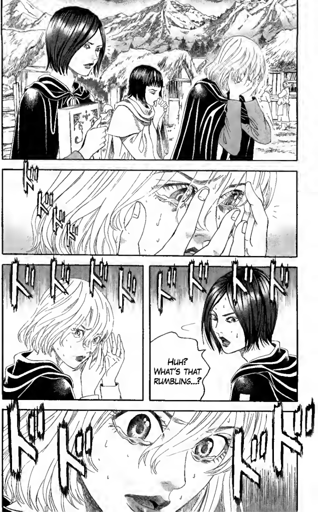

GOD WILL SURELY BE PLEASED!
AHAHA-HAHA!
HAHA-HAHAHA!
THE PATH TO HEAVEN IS A NARROW PATH THROUGH THE DARKNESS!
CONSIDER YOURSELVES BLESSED FOR REACHING IT!
I'M NOT GOING BACK TO THE VILLAGE UNTIL I KILL HUGO.
GO TELL ÉTIENNE THAT FOR ME, GUY...
AGHHH!
LI... LILI...

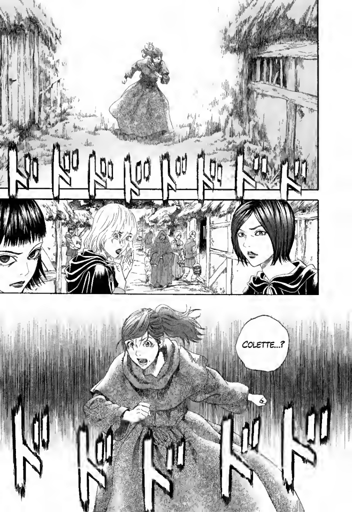

Alright.
But I'll come back here shortly after I report to Étienne.
Both Guillaume and Pierre were originally drawn to Hugo because of their hatred for me.
I have to shoulder responsibility for their deaths...
Henri!
Lilian!
I swear I'll avenge your deaths!

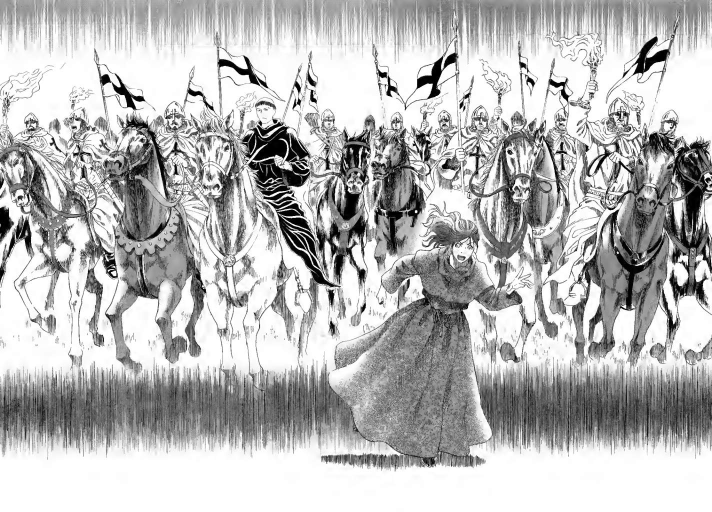

I WON'T EVER FORGIVE HUGO!

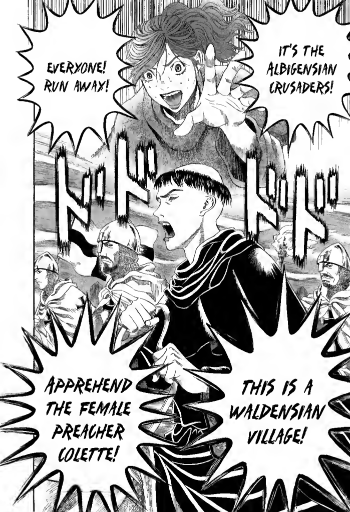

WHA?
Nod
N-
NO, THAT CAN'T BE!
DO YOU SWEAR THAT'S THE TRUTH, GUY!?
GUILLAUME...
PIERRE...
LILIAN...
AND HENRI...
EVEN HENRI...!?

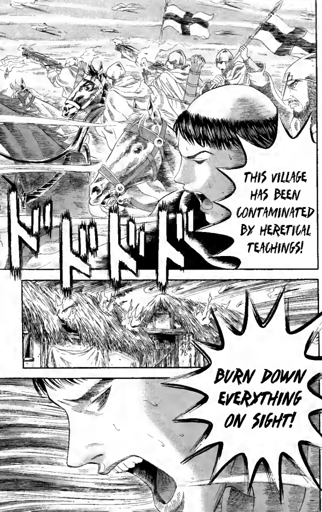

NO...
NO...
GOD...
WHY, GOD!?
THIS LAND... IS CURSED...
WE MUST LEAVE... AT ONCE...
IF YOU WANT TO LEAVE, THAT'S FINE.
I'M GOING BACK TO NICOLAS.
パカ
パカッ
パカッ

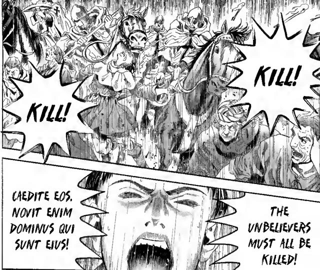

ドドドド
ドドドド
HUH? WHAT'S THAT RUMBLING...?
ドドドド
ドッドッ
ドッドッ


ドドドドドドドド
COLETTE...?
ドドドドド

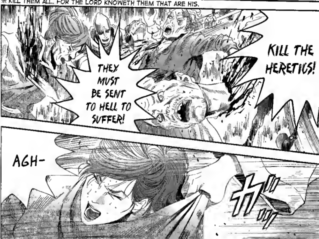


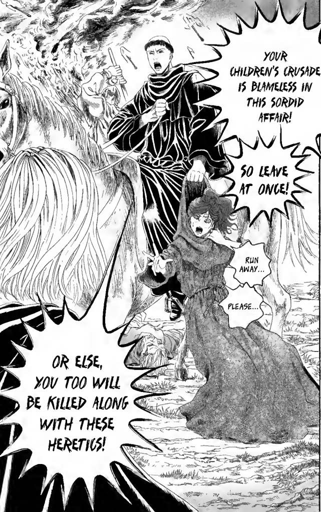

IT'S THE ALBIGENSIAN CRUSADERS!
EVERYONE! RUN AWAY!
ドドド
ドドド
THIS IS A WALDENSIAN VILLAGE!
APPREHEND THE FEMALE PREACHER COLETTE!

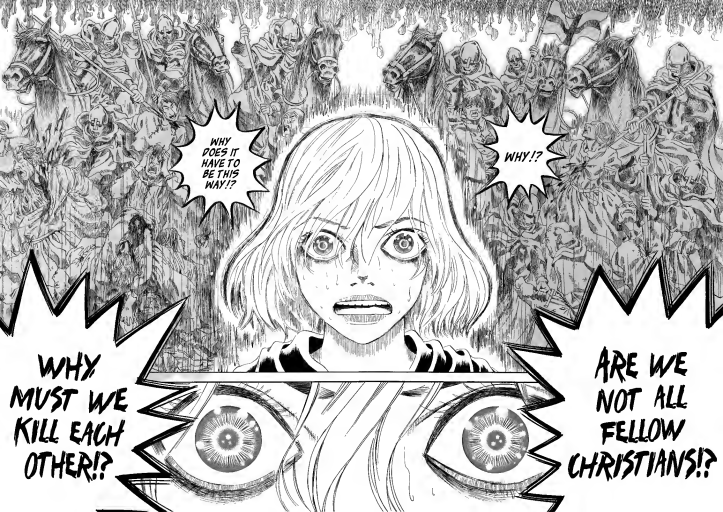

THIS VILLAGE HAS BEEN CONTAMINATED BY HERETICAL TEACHINGS!
ドドドド
BURN DOWN EVERYTHING ON SIGHT!

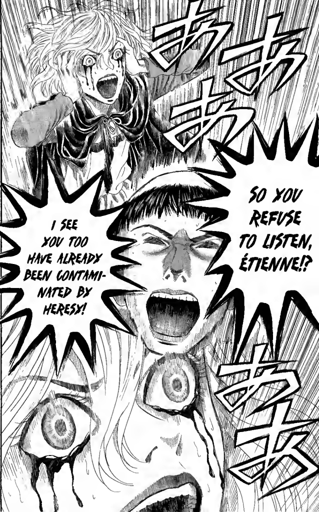

KILL!
KILL!
THE UNBELIEVERS MUST ALL BE KILLED!
CAEDITE EOS. NOVIT ENIM DOMINUS QUI SUNT EIUS!

※ KILL THEM ALL, FOR THE LORD KNOWETH THEM THAT ARE HIS.


KILL THE HERETICS!
THEY MUST BE SENT TO HELL TO SUFFER!
ガッ
AGH-

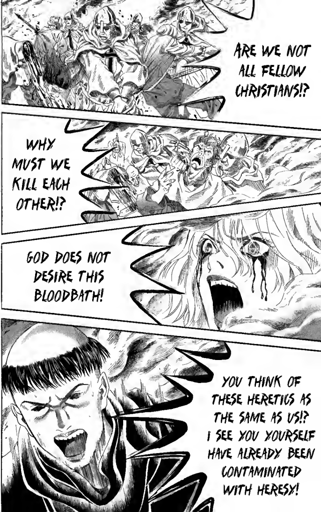

YOUR CHILDREN'S CRUSADE IS BLAMELESS IN THIS SORDID AFFAIR!
SO LEAVE AT ONCE!
RUN AWAY...
PLEASE...
OR ELSE, YOU TOO WILL BE KILLED ALONG WITH THESE HERETICS!

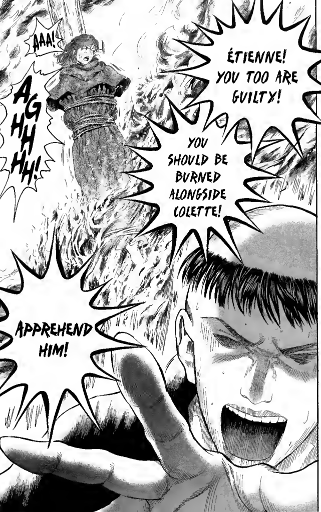

WHY!?
WHY DOES IT HAVE TO BE THIS WAY!?
ARE WE NOT ALL FELLOW CHRISTIANS!?
WHY MUST WE KILL EACH OTHER!?

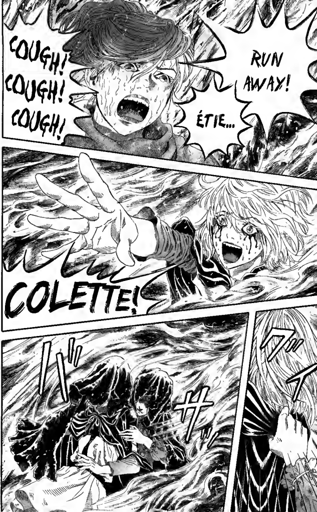

ああああ
SO YOU REFUSE TO LISTEN, ÉTIENNE!?
I SEE YOU TOO HAVE ALREADY BEEN CONTAMINATED BY HERESY!
ああ

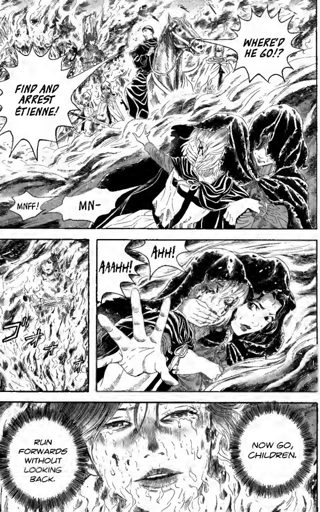
Chapter 20

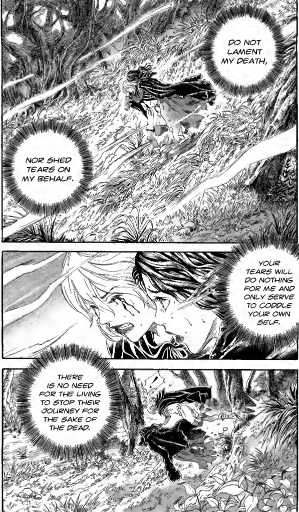
The Devil's Lair

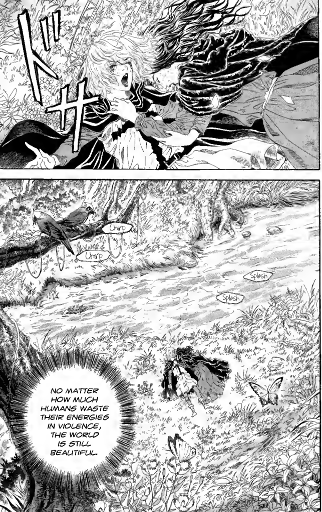

ARE WE NOT ALL FELLOW CHRISTIANS!?
WHY MUST WE KILL EACH OTHER!?
GOD DOES NOT DESIRE THIS BLOODBATH!
YOU THINK OF THESE HERETICS AS THE SAME AS US!? I SEE YOU YOURSELF HAVE ALREADY BEEN CONTAMINATED WITH HERESY!

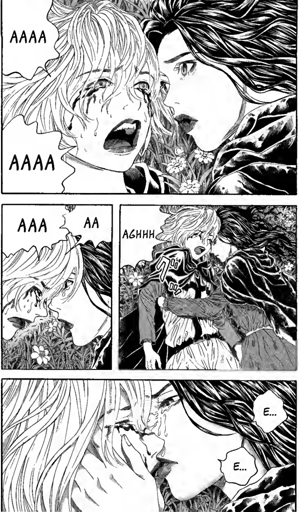

AAA!
AGHHHH!
ÉTIENNE! YOU TOO ARE GUILTY!
YOU SHOULD BE BURNED ALONGSIDE COLETTE!
APPREHEND HIM!

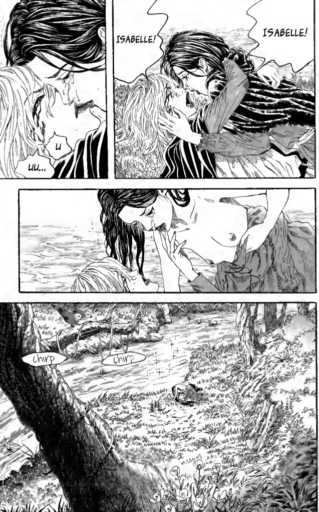

RUN AWAY!
ÉTIE...
COUGH! COUGH! COUGH!
COLETTE!
グイ
ザッ
バ

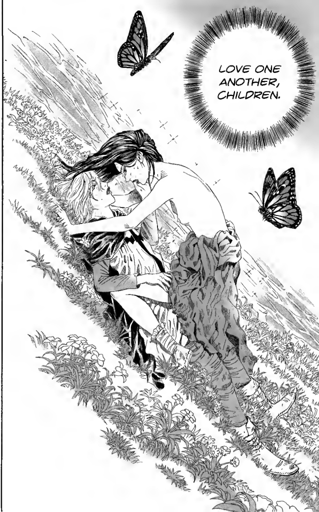

WHERE'D HE GO!?
FIND AND ARREST ÉTIENNE!
MN-
MNFF!
AHH!
AAAHH!
ゴォォォ
NOW GO, CHILDREN.
RUN FORWARDS WITHOUT LOOKING BACK.

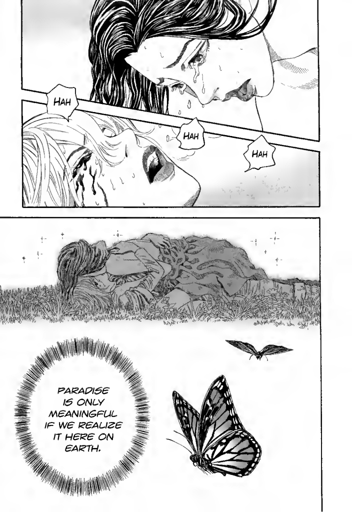

DO NOT LAMENT MY DEATH,
NOR SHED TEARS ON MY BEHALF.
YOUR TEARS WILL DO NOTHING FOR ME AND ONLY SERVE TO CODDLE YOUR OWN SELF.
THERE IS NO NEED FOR THE LIVING TO STOP THEIR JOURNEY FOR THE SAKE OF THE DEAD.

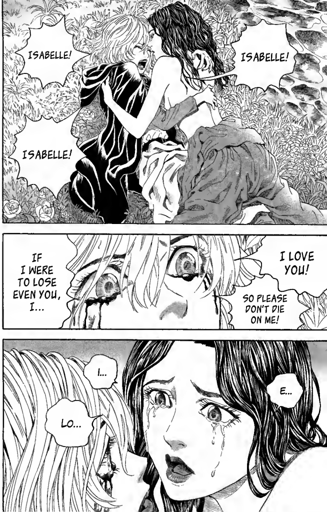

ドサ
Chirp
Chirp
Splash
Splash
NO MATTER HOW MUCH HUMANS WASTE THEIR ENERGIES IN VIOLENCE, THE WORLD IS STILL BEAUTIFUL.

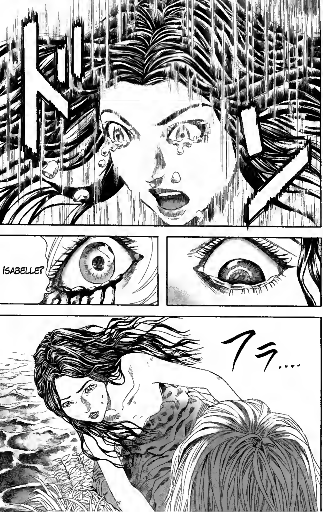

AAAA
AAAA
AGHHH
AA
AAA
E...
E...

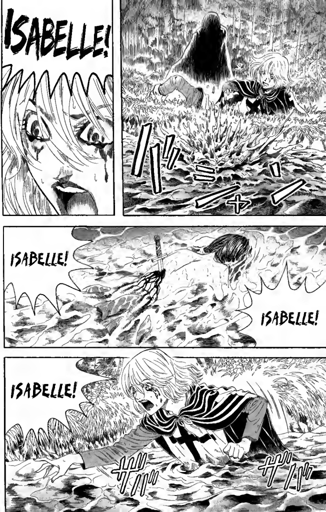

ISABELLE!
ISABELLE!
u
uu...
chirp
chirp

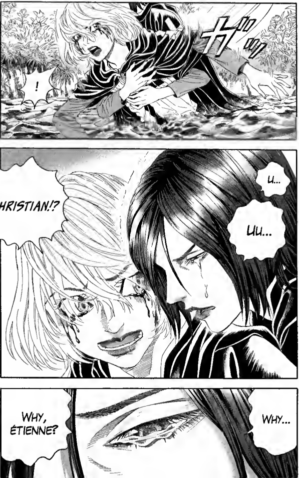

LOVE ONE ANOTHER, CHILDREN.

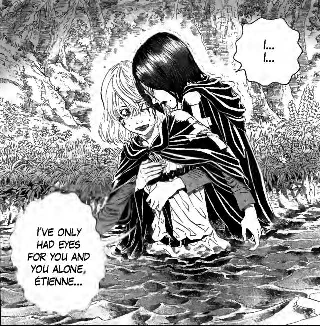

HAH
HAH
HAH
PARADISE IS ONLY MEANINGFUL IF WE REALIZE IT HERE ON EARTH.

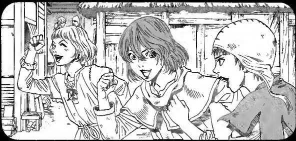

ISABELLE!
ISABELLE!
ISABELLE!
I LOVE YOU!
SO PLEASE DON'T DIE ON ME!
IF I WERE TO LOSE EVEN YOU, I...
E...
I...
LO...

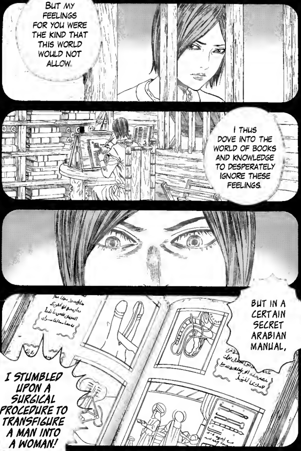

ドン
ISABELLE?
フラ....

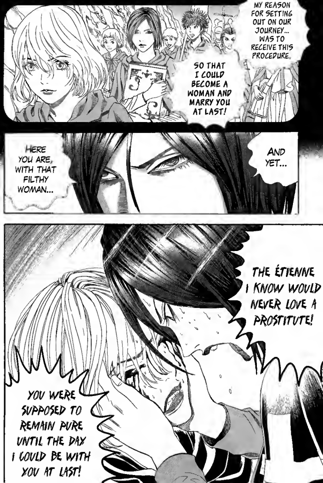

バシャーン
ISABELLE!
ISABELLE!
ISABELLE!
ISABELLE!
ザバ
ザバ

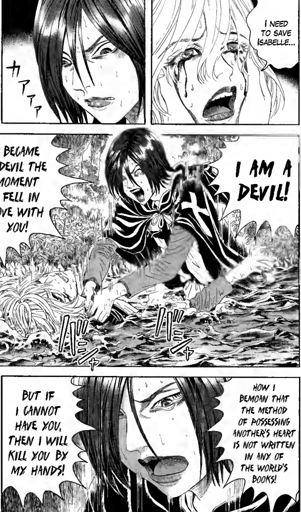

ガッ
!
U...
UU...
CHRISTIAN!?
WHY...
WHY, ÉTIENNE?

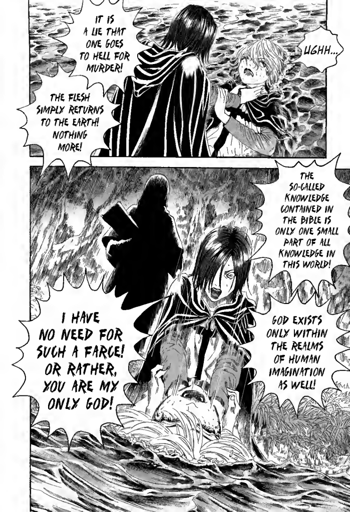

I...
I...
I'VE ONLY HAD EYES FOR YOU AND YOU ALONE, ÉTIENNE...

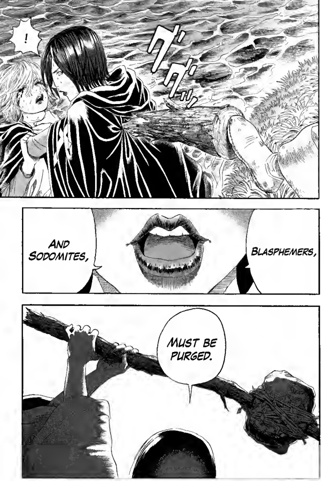


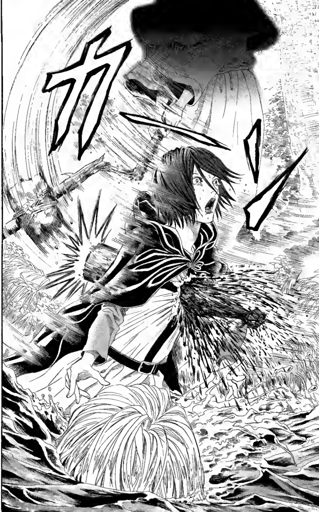

BUT MY FEELINGS FOR YOU WERE THE KIND THAT THIS WORLD WOULD NOT ALLOW.
I THUS DOVE INTO THE WORLD OF BOOKS AND KNOWLEDGE TO DESPERATELY IGNORE THESE FEELINGS.
BUT IN A CERTAIN SECRET ARABIAN MANUAL,
I STUMBLED UPON A SURGICAL PROCEDURE TO TRANSFIGURE A MAN INTO A WOMAN!

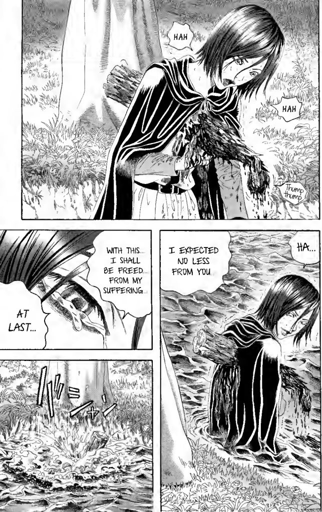

MY REASON FOR SETTING OUT ON OUR JOURNEY... WAS TO RECEIVE THIS PROCEDURE.
SO THAT I COULD BECOME A WOMAN AND MARRY YOU AT LAST!
AND YET...
HERE YOU ARE, WITH THAT FILTHY WOMAN...
THE ÉTIENNE I KNOW WOULD NEVER LOVE A PROSTITUTE!
YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO REMAIN PURE UNTIL THE DAY I COULD BE WITH YOU AT LAST!

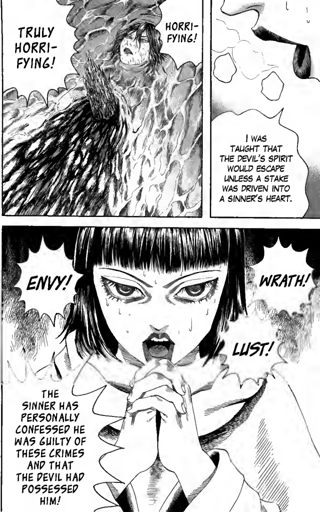

I NEED TO SAVE ISABELLE...
カァァァ
I AM A DEVIL!
I BECAME A DEVIL THE MOMENT I FELL IN LOVE WITH YOU!
バシャ
バシャ
HOW I BEMOAN THAT THE METHOD OF POSSESSING ANOTHER'S HEART IS NOT WRITTEN IN ANY OF THE WORLD'S BOOKS!
BUT IF I CANNOT HAVE YOU, THEN I WILL KILL YOU BY MY HANDS!

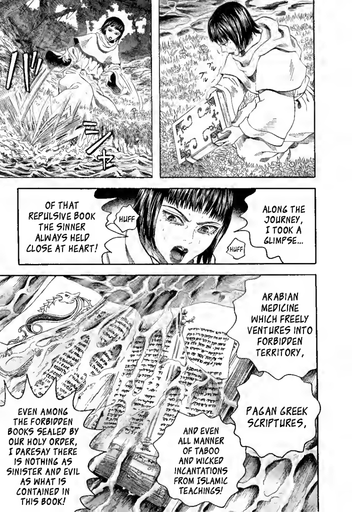

UGHH...
IT IS A LIE THAT ONE GOES TO HELL FOR MURDER!
THE FLESH SIMPLY RETURNS TO THE EARTH! NOTHING MORE!
THE SO-CALLED KNOWLEDGE CONTAINED IN THE BIBLE IS ONLY ONE SMALL PART OF ALL KNOWLEDGE IN THIS WORLD!
GOD EXISTS ONLY WITHIN THE REALMS OF HUMAN IMAGINATION AS WELL!
I HAVE NO NEED FOR SUCH A FARCE! OR RATHER, YOU ARE MY ONLY GOD!

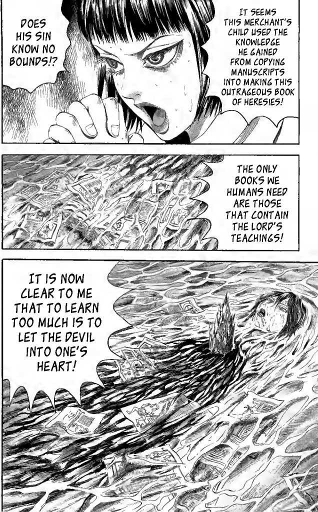

!
ググッ
BLASPHEMERS,
AND SODOMITES,
MUST BE PURGED.

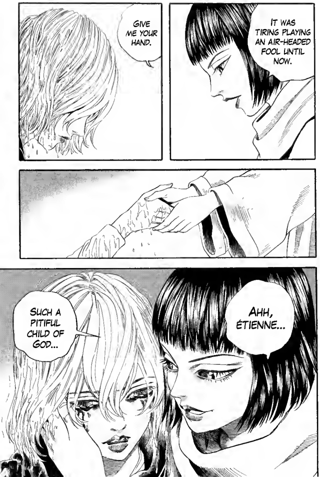

カッ

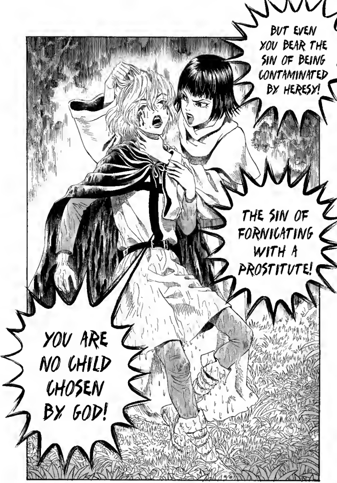

HAH
HAH
Thump thump
HA...
I EXPECTED NO LESS FROM YOU
WITH THIS I SHALL BE FREED FROM MY SUFFERING
AT LAST...
バシャン

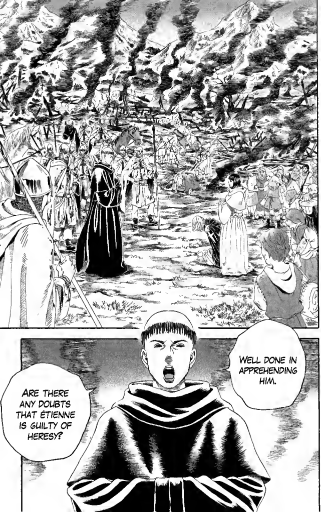

I WAS TAUGHT THAT THE DEVIL'S SPIRIT WOULD ESCAPE UNLESS A STAKE WAS DRIVEN INTO A SINNER'S HEART.
HORRIFYING!
TRULY HORRIFYING!
WRATH!
ENVY!
LUST!
THE SINNER HAS PERSONALLY CONFESSED HE WAS GUILTY OF THESE CRIMES AND THAT THE DEVIL HAD POSSESSED HIM!

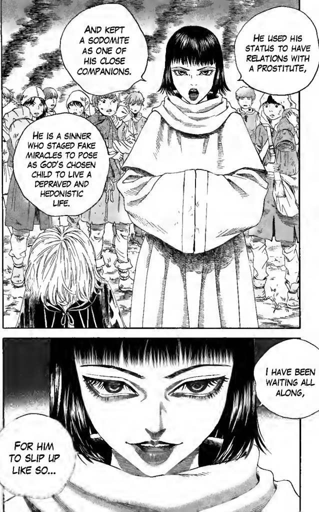

ブル
ブル
ALONG THE JOURNEY, I TOOK A GLIMPSE...
HUFF
HUFF
OF THAT REPULSIVE BOOK THE SINNER ALWAYS HELD CLOSE AT HEART!
ARABIAN MEDICINE WHICH FREELY VENTURES INTO FORBIDDEN TERRITORY,
PAGAN GREEK SCRIPTURES,
AND EVEN ALL MANNER OF TABOO AND WICKED INCANTATIONS FROM ISLAMIC TEACHINGS!
EVEN AMONG THE FORBIDDEN BOOKS SEALED BY OUR HOLY ORDER, I DARESAY THERE IS NOTHING AS SINISTER AND EVIL AS WHAT IS CONTAINED IN THIS BOOK!

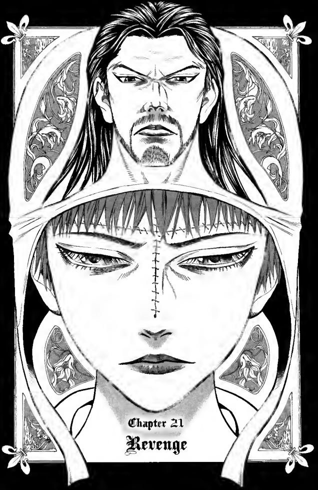

IT SEEMS THIS MERCHANT'S CHILD USED THE KNOWLEDGE HE GAINED FROM COPYING MANUSCRIPTS INTO MAKING THIS OUTRAGEOUS BOOK OF HERESIES!
DOES HIS SIN KNOW NO BOUNDS!?
THE ONLY BOOKS WE HUMANS NEED ARE THOSE THAT CONTAIN THE LORD'S TEACHINGS!
IT IS NOW CLEAR TO ME THAT TO LEARN TOO MUCH IS TO LET THE DEVIL INTO ONE'S HEART!


It was tiring playing an air-headed fool until now.
Give me your hand.
Ahh, Étienne...
Such a pitiful child of God...


BUT EVEN YOU BEAR THE SIN OF BEING CONTAMINATED BY HERESY!
THE SIN OF FORNICATING WITH A PROSTITUTE!
YOU ARE NO CHILD CHOSEN BY GOD!

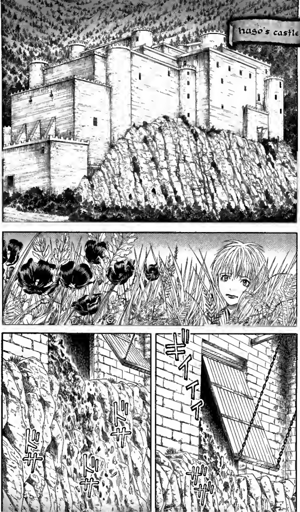

WELL DONE IN APPREHENDING HIM.
ARE THERE ANY DOUBTS THAT ÉTIENNE IS GUILTY OF HERESY?

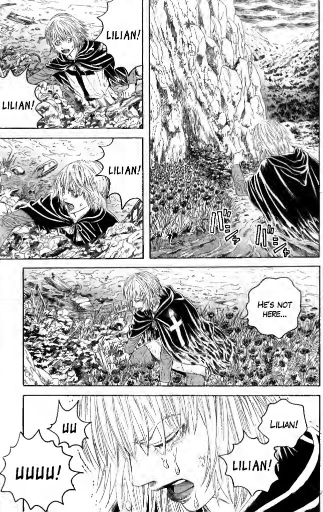

HE USED HIS STATUS TO HAVE RELATIONS WITH A PROSTITUTE,
AND KEPT A SODOMITE AS ONE OF HIS CLOSE COMPANIONS.
HE IS A SINNER WHO STAGED FAKE MIRACLES TO POSE AS GOD'S CHOSEN CHILD TO LIVE A DEPRAVED AND HEDONISTIC LIFE.
I HAVE BEEN WAITING ALL ALONG,
FOR HIM TO SLIP UP LIKE SO...

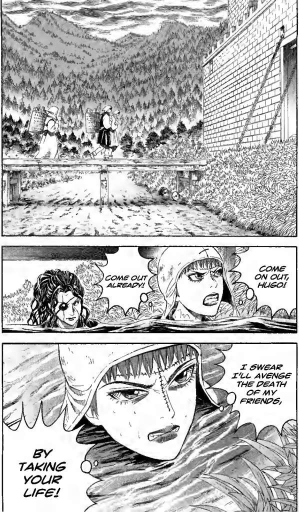


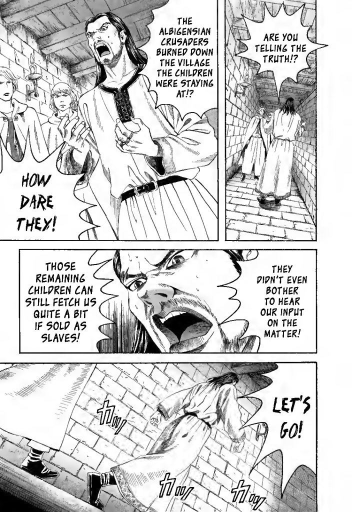
Chapter 21

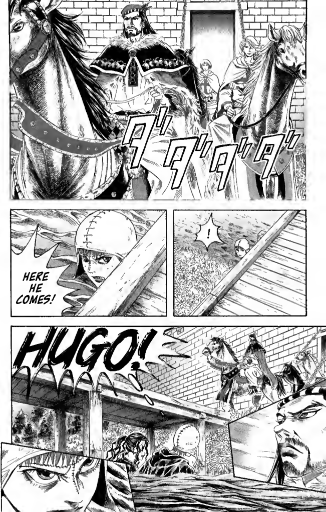
Revenge

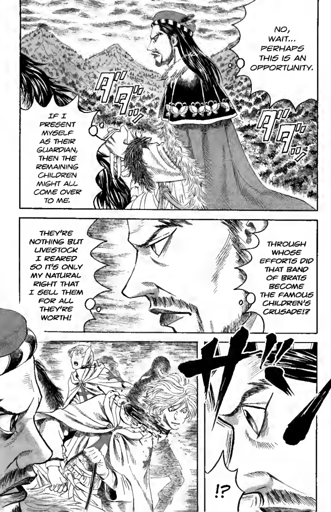

hugo's castle
ギイイイ
ザザ
ドサ
ドサ
ドサ

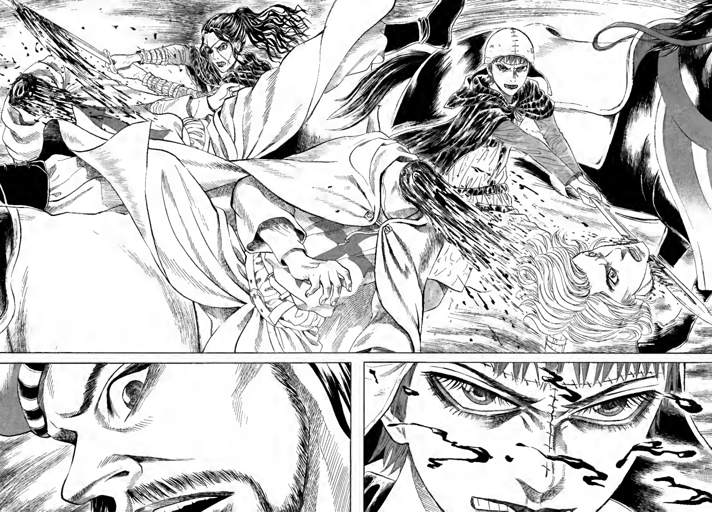

LILIAN!
LILIAN!
LILIAN!
HE'S NOT HERE...
LILIAN!
LILIAN!
UU
UUUU!

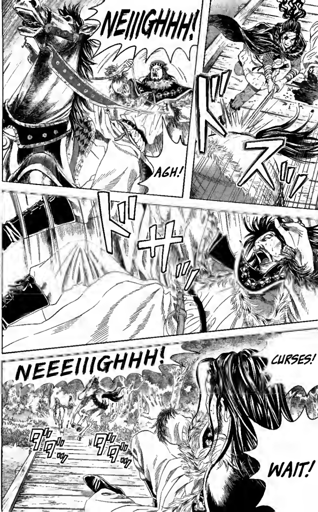

COME ON OUT, HUGO!
COME OUT ALREADY!
I SWEAR I'LL AVENGE THE DEATH OF MY FRIENDS,
BY TAKING YOUR LIFE!

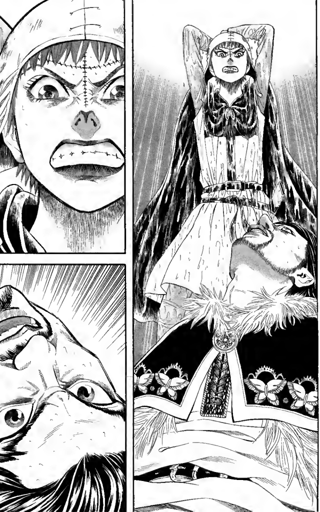

ARE YOU TELLING THE TRUTH!?
THE ALBIGENSIAN CRUSADERS BURNED DOWN THE VILLAGE THE CHILDREN WERE STAYING AT!?
HOW DARE THEY!
THEY DIDN'T EVEN BOTHER TO HEAR OUR INPUT ON THE MATTER!
THOSE REMAINING CHILDREN CAN STILL FETCH US QUITE A BIT IF SOLD AS SLAVES!
LET'S GO!
カッ
カッ
カッ

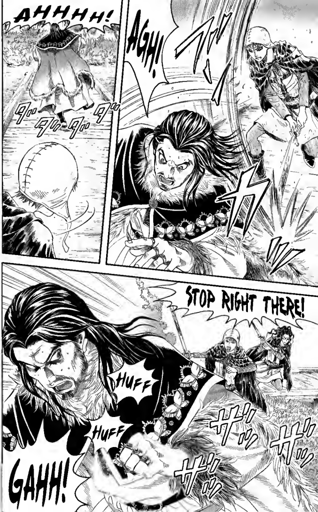

ダッダッダッダッ
!
HERE HE COMES!
HUGO!

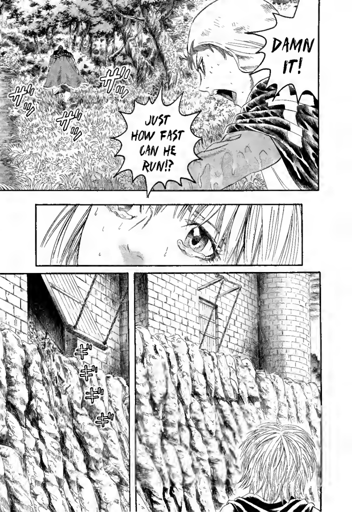

NO, WAIT... PERHAPS THIS IS AN OPPORTUNITY.
ダダッ
ダダッ
IF I PRESENT MYSELF AS THEIR GUARDIAN, THEN THE REMAINING CHILDREN MIGHT ALL COME OVER TO ME.
THROUGH WHOSE EFFORTS DID THAT BAND OF BRATS BECOME THE FAMOUS CHILDREN'S CRUSADE!?
THEY'RE NOTHING BUT LIVESTOCK I REARED SO IT'S ONLY MY NATURAL RIGHT THAT I SELL THEM FOR ALL THEY'RE WORTH!
ザッ
!?

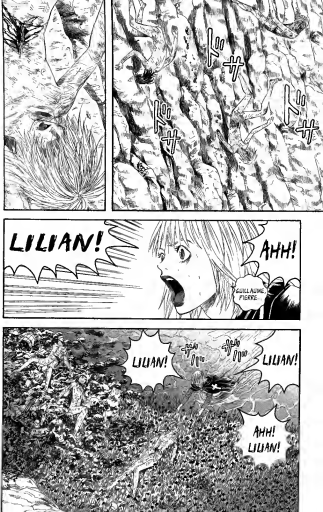


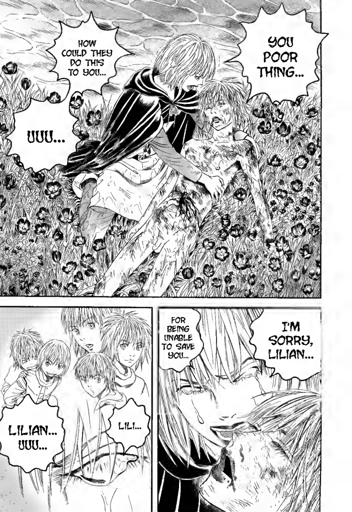

ドスッ
NEIIIGHHH!
AGH!
ドサッ
CURSES!
NEEEIIIGHHH!
ダダッ
ダダッ
WAIT!

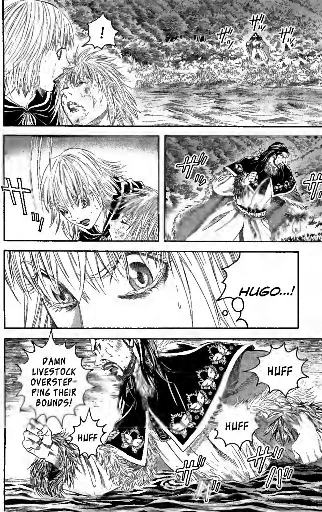


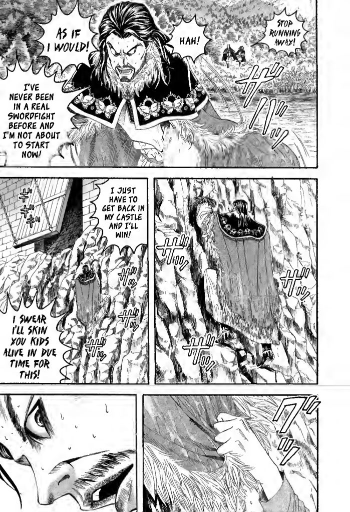

AGH!
ブン!
ガッ
AHHHH!
ダッ ダッ ダッ ダッ
STOP RIGHT THERE!
ザッ ザッ ザッ
HUFF
HUFF
GAHH!

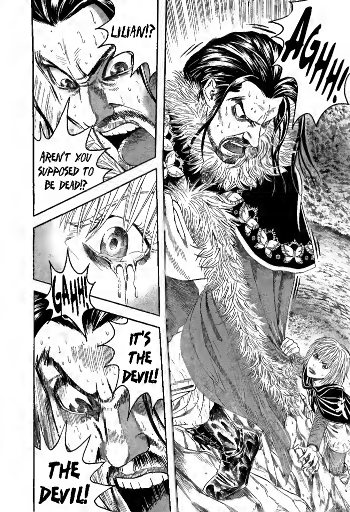

DAMN IT!
JUST HOW FAST CAN HE RUN!?
ザッ
ザッ
ザッ
ギ
ギ
ギ
ギ

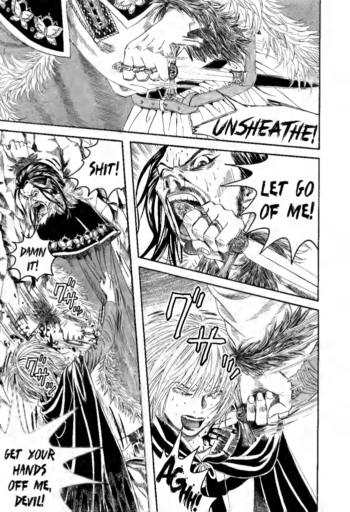

ドサ
ドサ
ドサ
AHH!
GUILLAUME, PIERRE
LILIAN!
ザバ
ザバ
LILIAN!
LILIAN!
AHH! LILIAN!

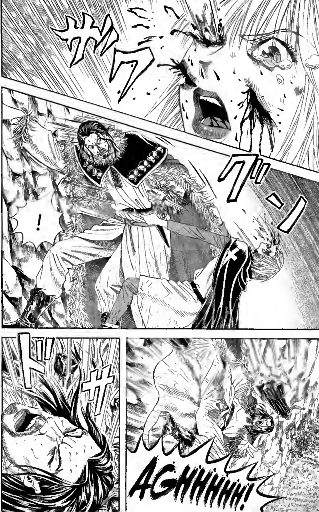

YOU POOR THING...
HOW COULD THEY DO THIS TO YOU...
UUU...
I'M SORRY, LILIAN...
FOR BEING UNABLE TO SAVE YOU...
LILI...
LILIAN... UUU...

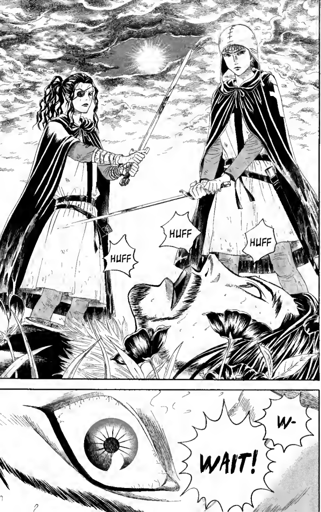

ザッ
ザッ
ザッ
!
ザッ
サッ
HUGO...!
HUFF
DAMN LIVESTOCK OVERSTEPPING THEIR BOUNDS!
HUFF
HUFF
ザバ
ザッ

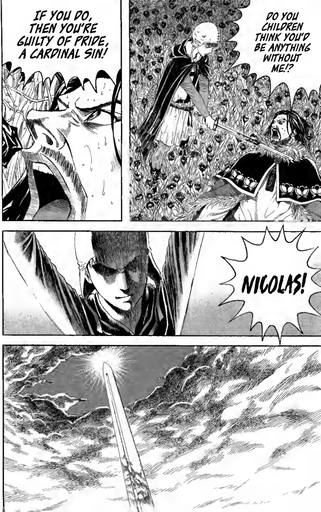

STOP RUNNING AWAY!
ザバッ
HAH!
AS IF I WOULD!
I'VE NEVER BEEN IN A REAL SWORDFIGHT BEFORE AND I'M NOT ABOUT TO START NOW!
ザッ
ザッ
ザッ
I JUST HAVE TO GET BACK IN MY CASTLE AND I'LL WIN!
ギッ
ギッ
ギッ
ザッ
ザッ
ザッ
I SWEAR I'LL SKIN YOU KIDS ALIVE IN DUE TIME FOR THIS!
グッ

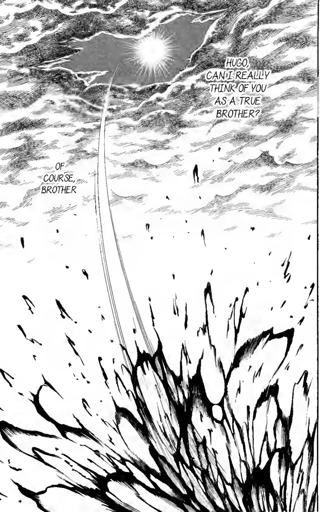

AGHH!
LILIAN!?
AREN'T YOU SUPPOSED TO BE DEAD!?
GAHH!
IT'S THE DEVIL!
THE DEVIL!

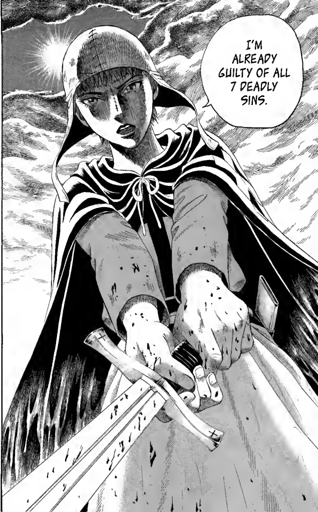

UNSHEATHE!
LET GO OF ME!
グサッ
AGHH!
SHIT!
DAMN IT!
グサッ
グサッ
GET YOUR HANDS OFF ME, DEVIL!

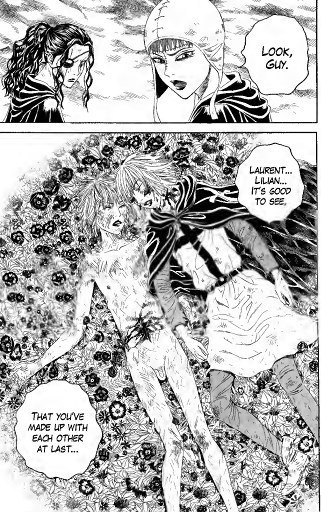

ザク
グン
!
AGHHHHH!
ドサ

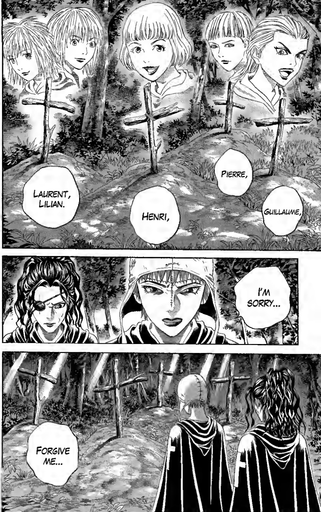

HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
W-
WAIT!

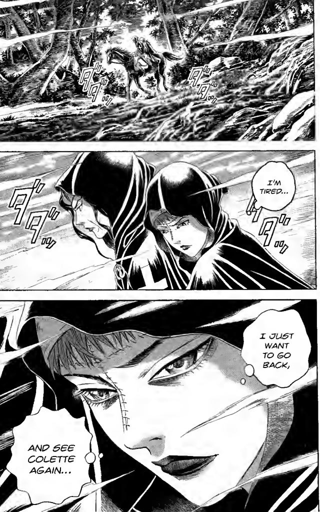

DO YOU CHILDREN THINK YOU'D BE ANYTHING WITHOUT ME!?
IF YOU DO, THEN YOU'RE GUILTY OF PRIDE, A CARDINAL SIN!
NICOLAS!

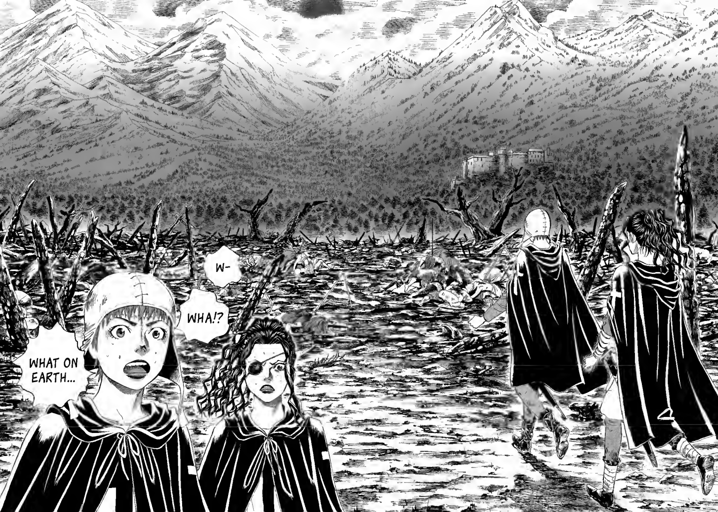

HUGO, CAN I REALLY THINK OF YOU AS A TRUE BROTHER?
OF COURSE, BROTHER

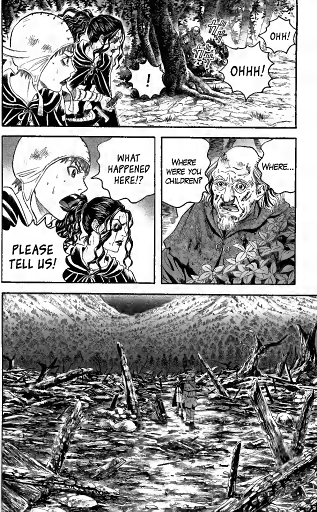

I'M ALREADY GUILTY OF ALL 7 DEADLY SINS.

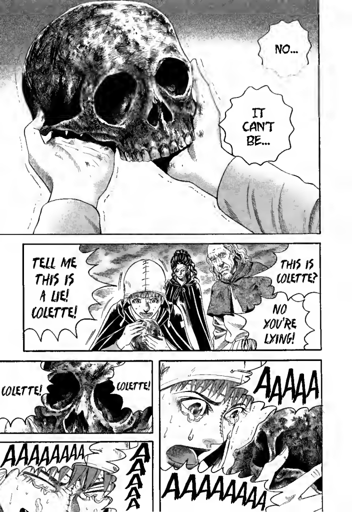

LOOK, GUY.
LAURENT... LILIAN... IT'S GOOD TO SEE.
THAT YOU'VE MADE UP WITH EACH OTHER AT LAST...

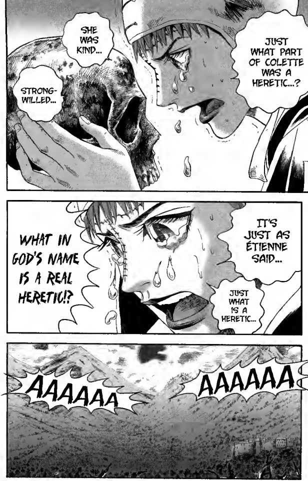

Guillaume,
Pierre,
Henri,
Laurent, Lilian.
I'm sorry...
Forgive me...

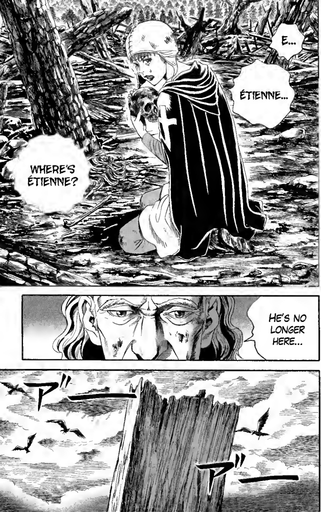

ダダッ
ダダッ
I'M TIRED...
ダダッ
ダダッ
I JUST WANT TO GO BACK,
AND SEE COLETTE AGAIN...

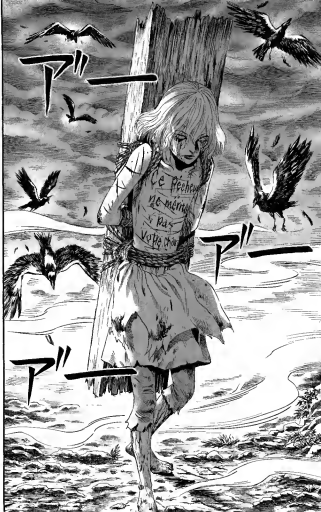

W-
WHA!?
WHAT ON EARTH...

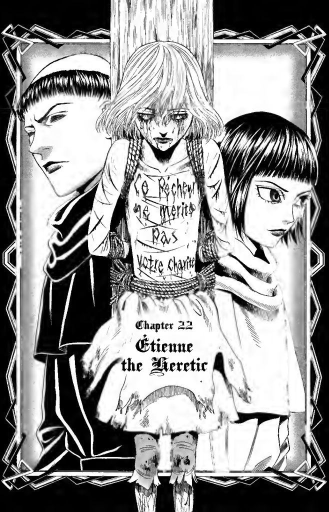

OHH!
OHHH!
ガサ
ガサ
!
WHERE...
WHERE WERE YOU CHILDREN?
WHAT HAPPENED HERE!?
PLEASE TELL US!


NO...
IT CAN'T BE...
THIS IS COLETTE?
NO YOU'RE LYING!
TELL ME THIS IS A LIE! COLETTE!
AAAAA
AAAAAAAA
COLETTE!
COLETTE!
AAAAAAAA
AAAAA


JUST WHAT PART OF COLETTE WAS A HERETIC...?
SHE WAS KIND...
STRONG-WILLED...
IT'S JUST AS ÉTIENNE SAID...
JUST WHAT IS A HERETIC...
WHAT IN GOD'S NAME IS A REAL HERETIC!?
AAAAAA
AAAAAA

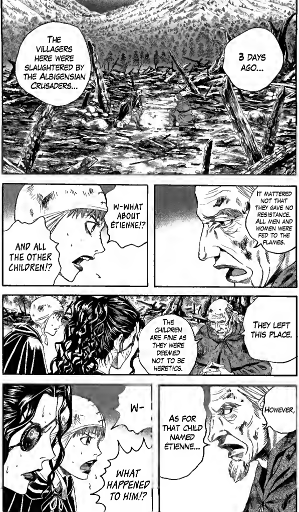

E...
ÉTIENNE...
WHERE'S ÉTIENNE?
HE'S NO LONGER HERE...
ア゛ー
ア゛ー

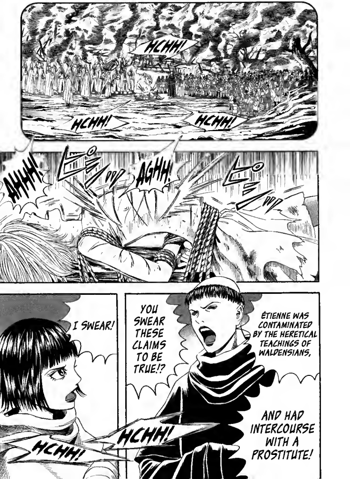

ア゛ー
Ce Pécheu
ne mérite
pas
Votre char
ア゛ー
ア゛ー

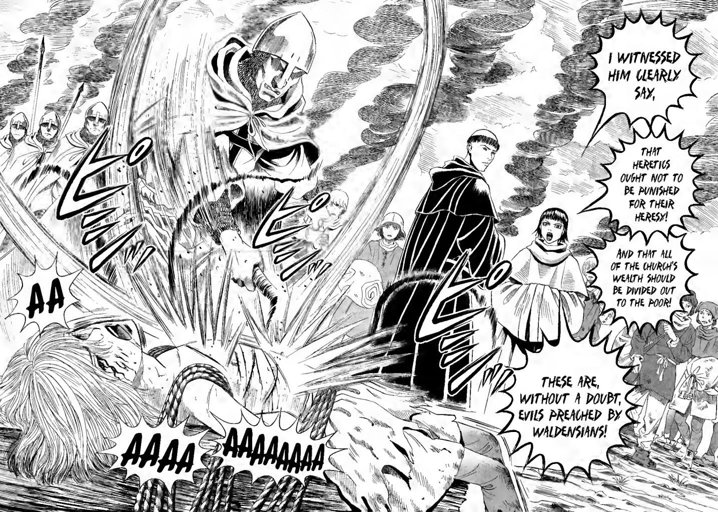

Le Pécheur
ne mérite
pas
votre charité

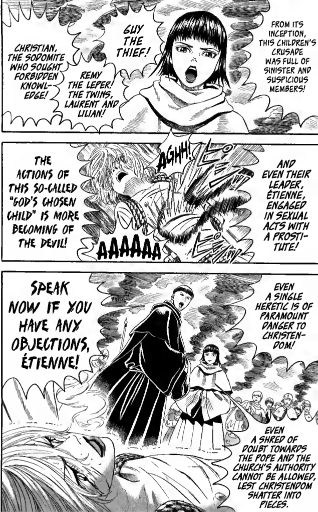
Chapter 22

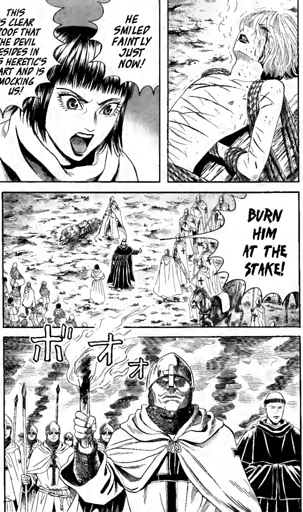
Étienne the Heretic

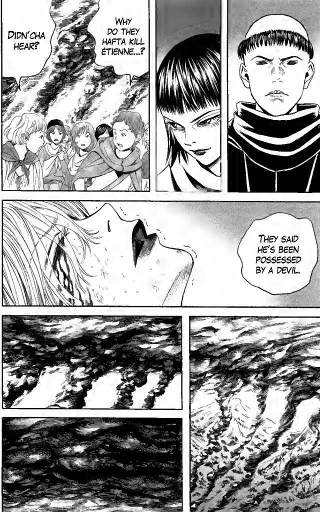

3 DAYS AGO...
THE VILLAGERS HERE WERE SLAUGHTERED BY THE ALBIGENSIAN CRUSADERS...
IT MATTERED NOT THAT THEY GAVE NO RESISTANCE. ALL MEN AND WOMEN WERE FED TO THE FLAMES.
W-WHAT ABOUT ÉTIENNE!?
AND ALL THE OTHER CHILDREN!?
THEY LEFT THIS PLACE.
THE CHILDREN ARE FINE AS THEY WERE DEEMED NOT TO BE HERETICS.
HOWEVER,
AS FOR THAT CHILD NAMED ÉTIENNE...
W-
WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM!?

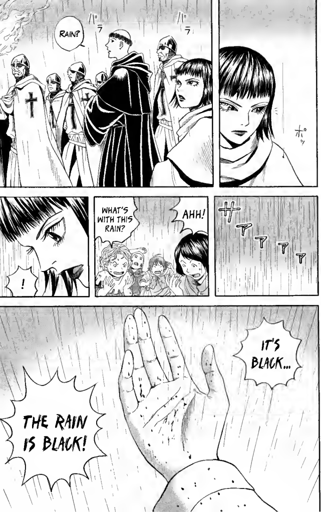

HCHH!
HCHH!
HCHH!
ピシッ
AGHH!
ピシッ
AHHH!
ÉTIENNE WAS CONTAMINATED BY THE HERETICAL TEACHINGS OF WALDENSIANS,
AND HAD INTERCOURSE WITH A PROSTITUTE!
YOU SWEAR THESE CLAIMS TO BE TRUE!?
HCHH!
I SWEAR!
HCHH!

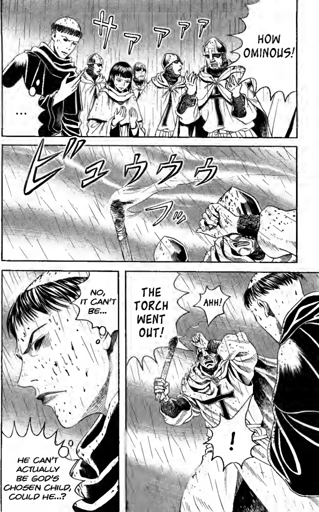

I WITNESSED HIM CLEARLY SAY,
THAT HERETICS OUGHT NOT TO BE PUNISHED FOR THEIR HERESY!
AND THAT ALL OF THE CHURCH'S WEALTH SHOULD BE DIVIDED OUT TO THE POOR!
THESE ARE, WITHOUT A DOUBT, EVILS PREACHED BY WALDENSIANS!
AA
AAAA
AAAAAAAA

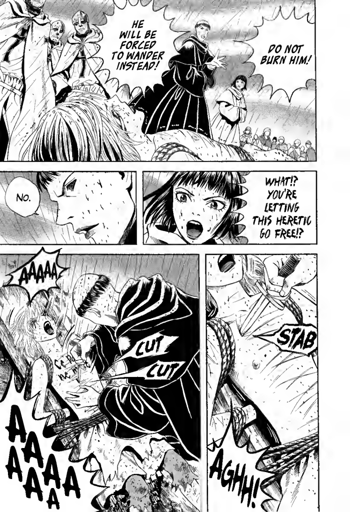

FROM ITS INCEPTION, THIS CHILDREN'S CRUSADE WAS FULL OF SINISTER AND SUSPICIOUS MEMBERS!
GUY THE THIEF!
REMY THE LEPER! THE TWINS, LAURENT AND LILIAN!
CHRISTIAN, THE SODOMITE WHO SOUGHT FORBIDDEN KNOWLEDGE!
AND EVEN THEIR LEADER, ÉTIENNE, ENGAGED IN SEXUAL ACTS WITH A PROSTITUTE!
AGHH!
AAAAAA
THE ACTIONS OF THIS SO-CALLED "GOD'S CHOSEN CHILD" IS MORE BECOMING OF THE DEVIL!
EVEN A SINGLE HERETIC IS OF PARAMOUNT DANGER TO CHRISTENDOM!
EVEN A SHRED OF DOUBT TOWARDS THE POPE AND THE CHURCH'S AUTHORITY CANNOT BE ALLOWED, LEST CHRISTENDOM SHATTER INTO PIECES.
SPEAK NOW IF YOU HAVE ANY OBJECTIONS, ÉTIENNE!

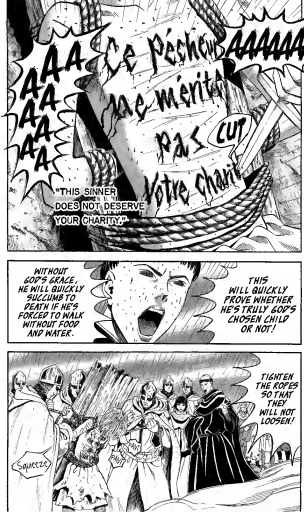

HE SMILED FAINTLY JUST NOW!
THIS IS CLEAR PROOF THAT THE DEVIL RESIDES IN THIS HERETIC'S HEART AND IS MOCKING US!
BURN HIM AT THE STAKE!
ボオオ

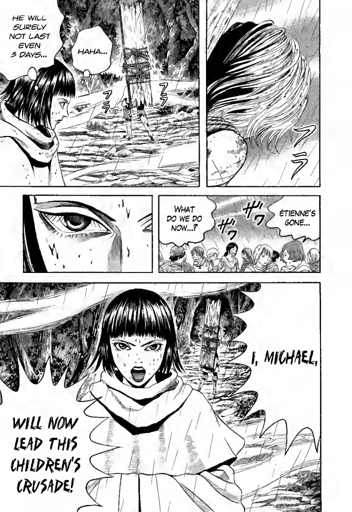

WHY DO THEY HAFTA KILL ÉTIENNE...?
DIDN'CHA HEAR?
THEY SAID HE'S BEEN POSSESSED BY A DEVIL.

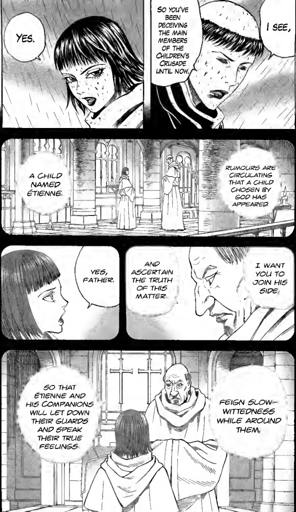

パラ
パラ
RAIN?
ポツ
!
AHH!
WHAT'S WITH THIS RAIN?
サァァァァ
IT'S BLACK...
THE RAIN IS BLACK!

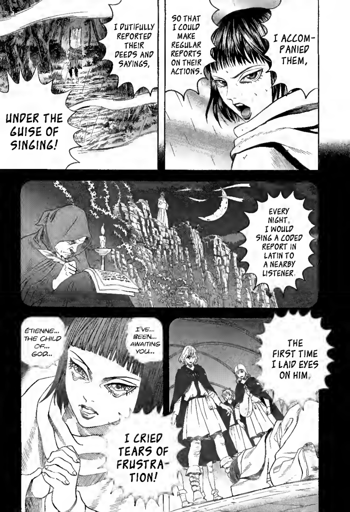

サァァァァ
HOW OMINOUS!
...
ビュウウウ
フッ
AHH!
THE TORCH WENT OUT!
NO, IT CAN'T BE...
HE CAN'T ACTUALLY BE GOD'S CHOSEN CHILD, COULD HE...?
!

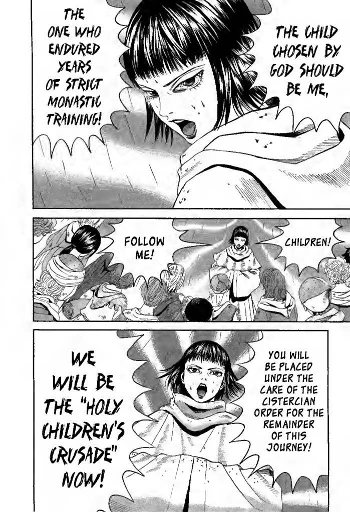

DO NOT BURN HIM!
HE WILL BE FORCED TO WANDER INSTEAD!
WHAT!? YOU'RE LETTING THIS HERETIC GO FREE!?
NO.
STAB
AGHH!
AAAAA
CUT
CUT
AAAAAAAA

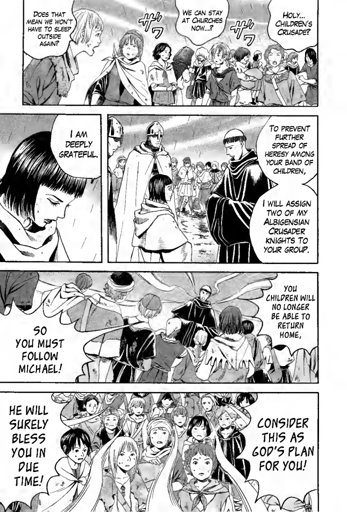

AAAAAAAAAAA
Ce Pécheur ne mérite pas votre charité
AAAAAAA
CUT
"THIS SINNER DOES NOT DESERVE YOUR CHARITY."
WITHOUT GOD'S GRACE, HE WILL QUICKLY SUCCUMB TO DEATH IF HE'S FORCED TO WALK WITHOUT FOOD AND WATER.
THIS WILL QUICKLY PROVE WHETHER HE'S TRULY GOD'S CHOSEN CHILD OR NOT!
TIGHTEN THE ROPES SO THAT THEY WILL NOT LOOSEN!
PANT
PANT
Squeeze

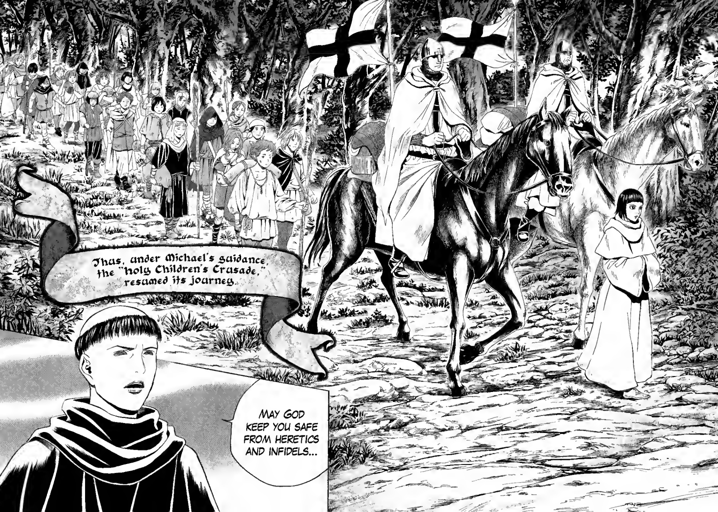

フ
ラ
HE WILL SURELY NOT LAST EVEN 3 DAYS...
HAHA...
フラ
フラ
ÉTIENNE'S GONE...
ザワ
ザワ
WHAT DO WE DO NOW...?
I, MICHAEL,
WILL NOW LEAD THIS CHILDREN'S CRUSADE!

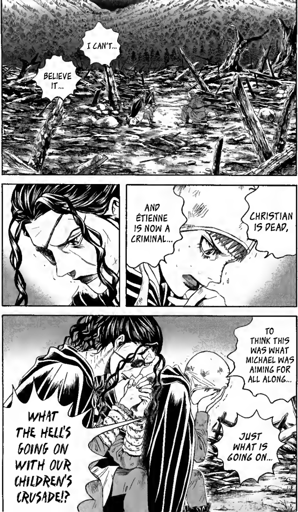

I see,
So you've been deceiving the main members of the Children's Crusade until now.
Yes.
Rumours are circulating that a child chosen by God has appeared.
A child named Étienne.
I want you to join his side.
And ascertain the truth of this matter.
Yes, father.
Feign slow-wittedness while around them.
So that Étienne and his companions will let down their guards and speak their true feelings.

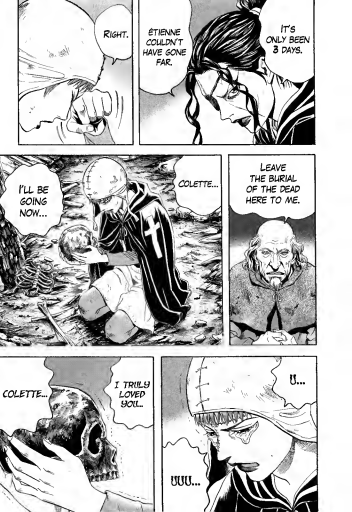

I ACCOMPANIED THEM,
SO THAT I COULD MAKE REGULAR REPORTS ON THEIR ACTIONS.
I DUTIFULLY REPORTED THEIR DEEDS AND SAYINGS,
UNDER THE GUISE OF SINGING!
EVERY NIGHT, I WOULD SING A CODED REPORT IN LATIN TO A NEARBY LISTENER.
THE FIRST TIME I LAID EYES ON HIM,
I'VE... BEEN... AWAITING YOU...
ÉTIENNE... THE CHILD OF... GOD...
I CRIED TEARS OF FRUSTRATION!

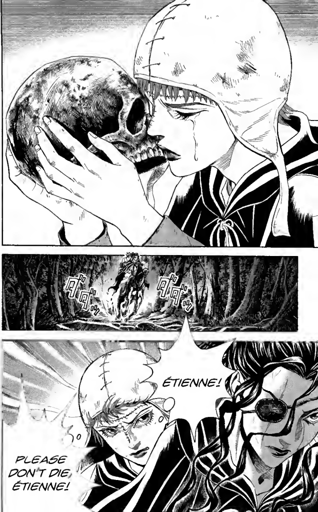

THE CHILD CHOSEN BY GOD SHOULD BE ME,
THE ONE WHO ENDURED YEARS OF STRICT MONASTIC TRAINING!
CHILDREN!
FOLLOW ME!
YOU WILL BE PLACED UNDER THE CARE OF THE CISTERCIAN ORDER FOR THE REMAINDER OF THIS JOURNEY!
WE WILL BE THE "HOLY CHILDREN'S CRUSADE" NOW!


HOLY... CHILDREN'S CRUSADE?
ザワ
WE CAN STAY AT CHURCHES NOW...?
ザワ
DOES THAT MEAN WE WON'T HAVE TO SLEEP OUTSIDE AGAIN?
TO PREVENT FURTHER SPREAD OF HERESY AMONG YOUR BAND OF CHILDREN,
I WILL ASSIGN TWO OF MY ALBIGENSIAN CRUSADER KNIGHTS TO YOUR GROUP.
I AM DEEPLY GRATEFUL.
YOU CHILDREN WILL NO LONGER BE ABLE TO RETURN HOME,
SO YOU MUST FOLLOW MICHAEL!
CONSIDER THIS AS GOD'S PLAN FOR YOU!
HE WILL SURELY BLESS YOU IN DUE TIME!


Thus, under Michael's guidance, the "Holy Children's Crusade," resumed its journey.
MAY GOD KEEP YOU SAFE FROM HERETICS AND INFIDELS...

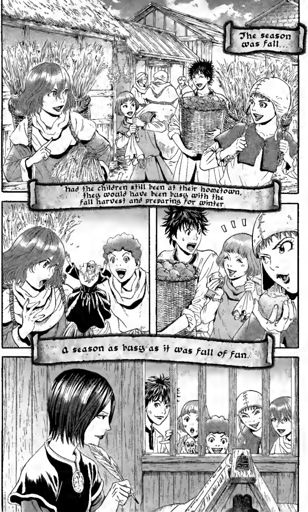

I CAN'T...
BELIEVE IT...
CHRISTIAN IS DEAD,
AND ÉTIENNE IS NOW A CRIMINAL...
TO THINK THIS WAS WHAT MICHAEL WAS AIMING FOR ALL ALONG...
JUST WHAT IS GOING ON...
WHAT THE HELL'S GOING ON WITH OUR CHILDREN'S CRUSADE!?

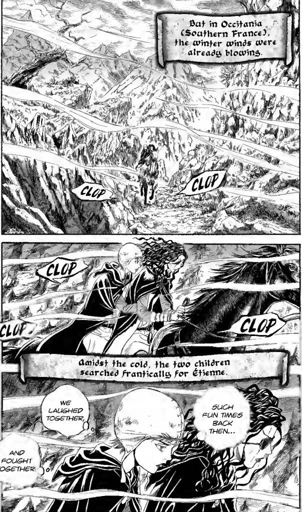

It's only been 3 days.
Étienne couldn't have gone far.
Right.
Leave the burial of the dead here to me.
Colette...
I'll be going now...
U...
UUU...
I truly loved you...
Colette...

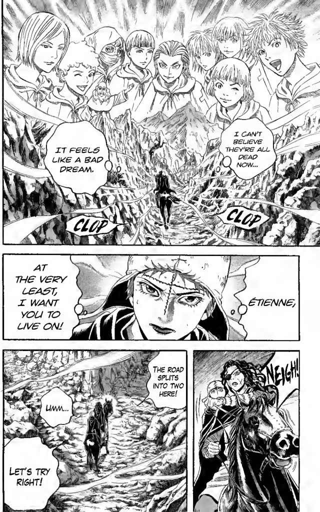

ダダッ
ダダッ
ÉTIENNE!
PLEASE DON'T DIE, ÉTIENNE!

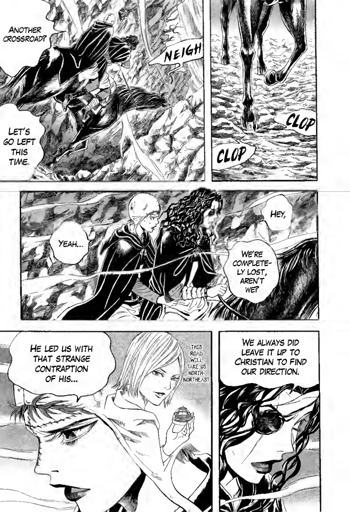
Chapter 23

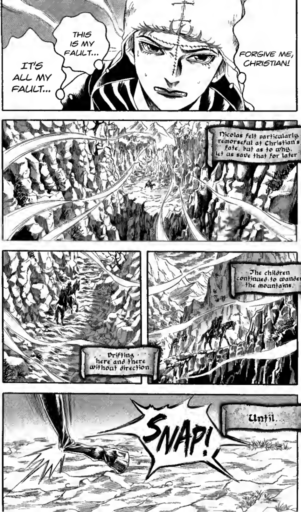
Holy Children's Crusade

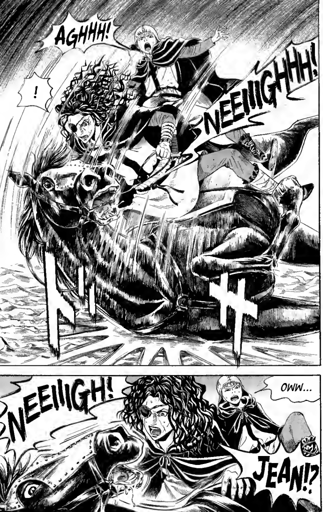

The season was fall...
had the children still been at their hometown, they would have been busy with the fall harvest and preparing for winter
A season as busy as it was full of fun.

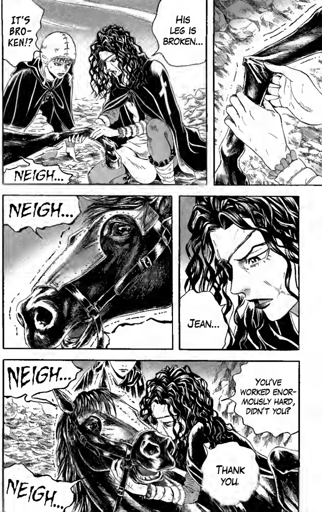

But in Occitania (Southern France), the winter winds were already blowing.
CLOP
CLOP
CLOP
CLOP
CLOP
Amidst the cold, the two children searched frantically for Étienne.
WE LAUGHED TOGETHER,
AND FOUGHT TOGETHER
SUCH FUN TIMES BACK THEN...

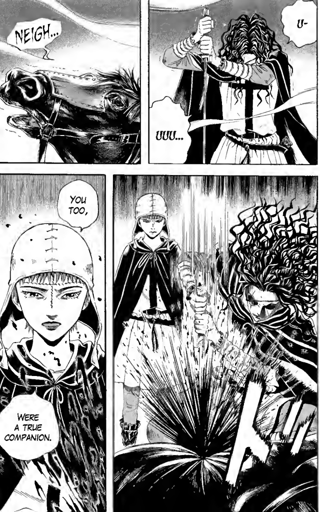

I CAN'T BELIEVE THEY'RE ALL DEAD NOW...
IT FEELS LIKE A BAD DREAM.
CLOP
CLOP
ÉTIENNE,
AT THE VERY LEAST, I WANT YOU TO LIVE ON!
NEIGH!
THE ROAD SPLITS INTO TWO HERE!
UMM...
LET'S TRY RIGHT!

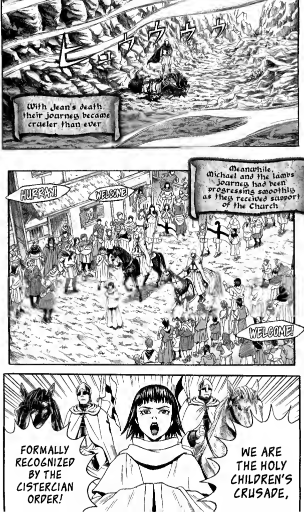

CLOP
CLOP
ANOTHER CROSSROAD?
NEIGH
LET'S GO LEFT THIS TIME.
HEY,
WE'RE COMPLETELY LOST, AREN'T WE?
YEAH...
WE ALWAYS DID LEAVE IT UP TO CHRISTIAN TO FIND OUR DIRECTION.
THIS ROAD WILL TAKE US NORTH-NORTHEAST
HE LED US WITH THAT STRANGE CONTRAPTION OF HIS...

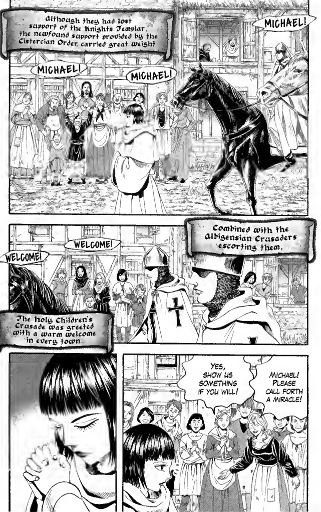

THIS IS MY FAULT...
IT'S ALL MY FAULT...
FORGIVE ME, CHRISTIAN!
Nicolas felt particularly remorseful at Christian's fate, but as to why, let us save that for later
Drifting here and there without direction.
The children continued to wander the mountains.
SNAP!
Until.

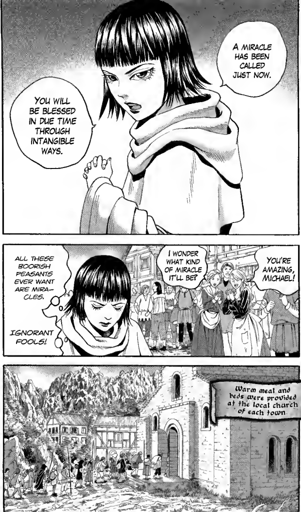

AGHHH!
!
NEEIIIGHHH!
NEEIIIGH!
OWW...
JEAN!?

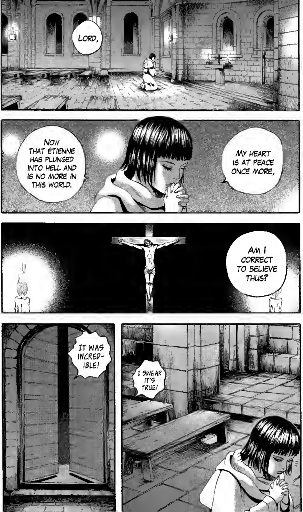

His leg is broken...
It's broken!?
NEIGH...
JEAN...
NEIGH...
You've worked enormously hard, didn't you?
Thank you.
NEIGH...
NEIGH...

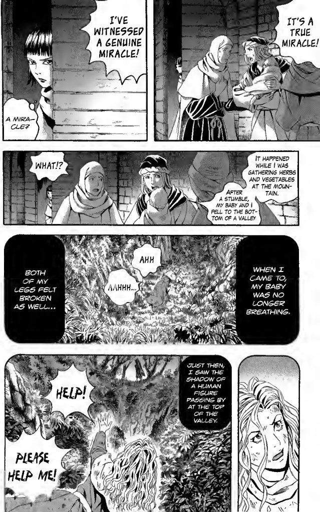

NEIGH...
U-
UUU...
YOU TOO,
WERE A TRUE COMPANION.

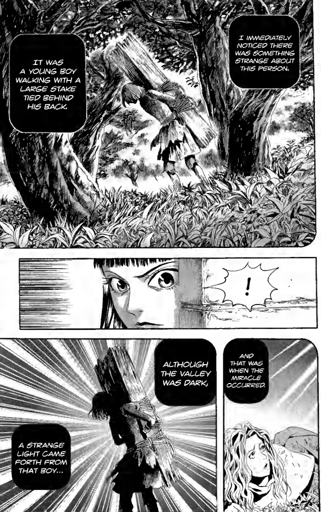

ヒュウウウウ
With Jean's death their journey became crueler than ever
Meanwhile, Michael and the lambs journey had been progressing smoothly as they received support of the Church
WELCOME!
HURRAY!
WELCOME!
WE ARE THE HOLY CHILDREN'S CRUSADE,
FORMALLY RECOGNIZED BY THE CISTERCIAN ORDER!

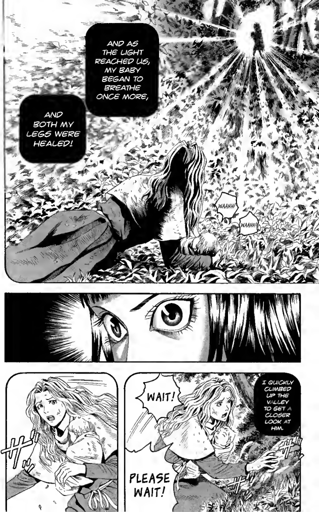

Although they had lost support of the Knights Templar, the newfound support provided by the Cistercian Order carried great weight
MICHAEL!
MICHAEL!
MICHAEL!
WELCOME!
WELCOME!
Combined with the Albigensian Crusaders escorting them,
The holy Children's Crusade was greeted with a warm welcome in every town.
YES, SHOW US SOMETHING IF YOU WILL!
MICHAEL! PLEASE CALL FORTH A MIRACLE!

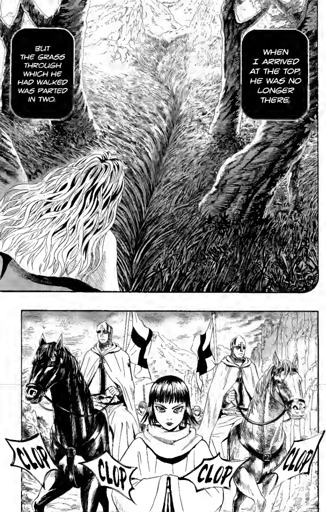

A MIRACLE HAS BEEN CALLED JUST NOW.
YOU WILL BE BLESSED IN DUE TIME THROUGH INTANGIBLE WAYS.
YOU'RE AMAZING, MICHAEL!
I WONDER WHAT KIND OF MIRACLE IT'LL BE?
ALL THESE BOORISH PEASANTS EVER WANT ARE MIRACLES.
IGNORANT FOOLS!
Warm meat and beds were provided at the local church of each town

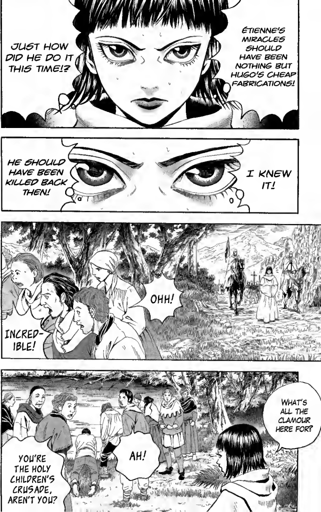

LORD,
NOW THAT ÉTIENNE HAS PLUNGED INTO HELL AND IS NO MORE IN THIS WORLD.
MY HEART IS AT PEACE ONCE MORE,
AM I CORRECT TO BELIEVE THUS?
IT WAS INCREDIBLE!
I SWEAR IT'S TRUE!

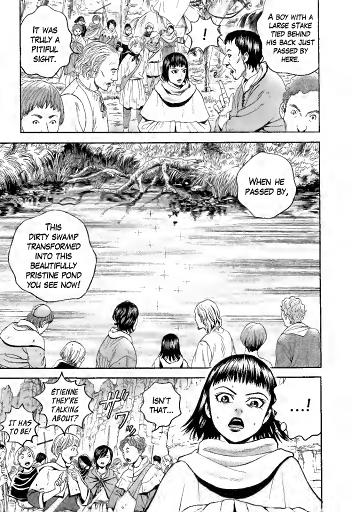

IT'S A TRUE MIRACLE!
I'VE WITNESSED A GENUINE MIRACLE!
A MIRA-CLE?
IT HAPPENED WHILE I WAS GATHERING HERBS AND VEGETABLES AT THE MOUN-TAIN.
AFTER A STUMBLE, MY BABY AND I FELL TO THE BOT-TOM OF A VALLEY
WHAT!?
WHEN I CAME TO, MY BABY WAS NO LONGER BREATHING.
AHH
AAHHH...
BOTH OF MY LEGS FELT BROKEN AS WELL...
JUST THEN, I SAW THE SHADOW OF A HUMAN FIGURE PASSING BY AT THE TOP OF THE VALLEY.
HELP!
PLEASE HELP ME!

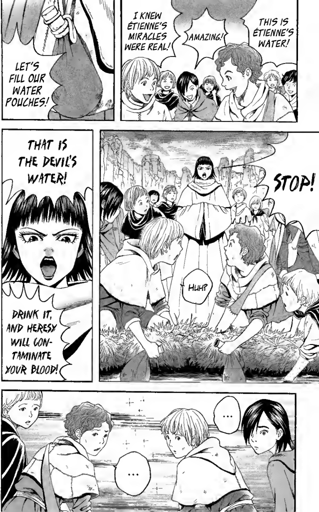

IT WAS A YOUNG BOY WALKING WITH A LARGE STAKE TIED BEHIND HIS BACK.
I IMMEDIATELY NOTICED THERE WAS SOMETHING STRANGE ABOUT THIS PERSON.
!
ALTHOUGH THE VALLEY WAS DARK,
A STRANGE LIGHT CAME FORTH FROM THAT BOY...
AND THAT WAS WHEN THE MIRACLE OCCURRED.

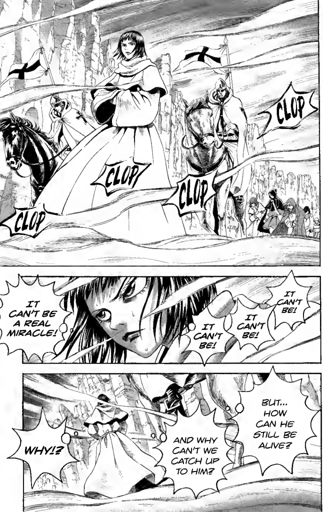

AND AS THE LIGHT REACHED US, MY BABY BEGAN TO BREATHE ONCE MORE,
AND BOTH MY LEGS WERE HEALED!
WAAHH!
WAAHH!!
I QUICKLY CLIMBED UP THE VALLEY TO GET A CLOSER LOOK AT HIM.
WAIT!
PLEASE WAIT!

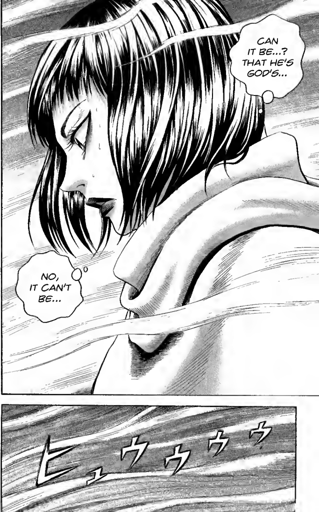

WHEN I ARRIVED AT THE TOP HE WAS NO LONGER THERE
BUT THE GRASS THROUGH WHICH HE HAD WALKED WAS PARTED IN TWO.
CLOP
CLOP
CLOP
CLOP

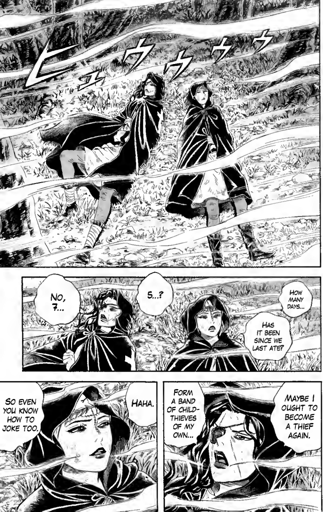

ÉTIENNE'S MIRACLES SHOULD HAVE BEEN NOTHING BUT HUGO'S CHEAP FABRICATIONS!
JUST HOW DID HE DO IT THIS TIME!?
I KNEW IT!
HE SHOULD HAVE BEEN KILLED BACK THEN!
OHH!
INCREDIBLE!
WHAT'S ALL THE CLAMOUR HERE FOR?
AH!
YOU'RE THE HOLY CHILDREN'S CRUSADE, AREN'T YOU?

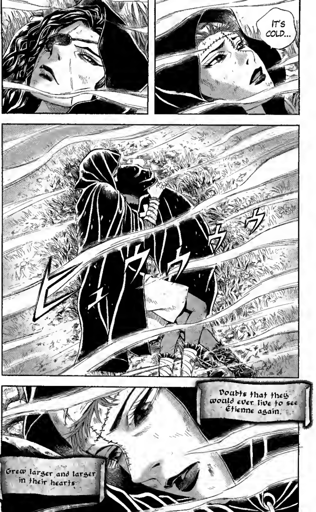

A BOY WITH A LARGE STAKE TIED BEHIND HIS BACK JUST PASSED BY HERE.
!
IT WAS TRULY A PITIFUL SIGHT.
WHEN HE PASSED BY,
THIS DIRTY SWAMP TRANSFORMED INTO THIS BEAUTIFULLY PRISTINE POND YOU SEE NOW!
...!
ISN'T THAT...
ザワッ
ÉTIENNE THEY'RE TALKING ABOUT?
IT HAS TO BE!

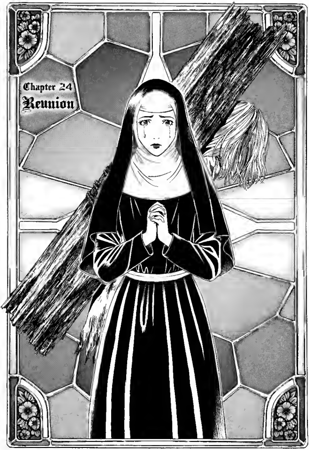

THIS IS ÉTIENNE'S WATER!
AMAZING!
I KNEW ÉTIENNE'S MIRACLES WERE REAL!
LET'S FILL OUR WATER POUCHES!
STOP!
HUH?
THAT IS THE DEVIL'S WATER!
DRINK IT, AND HERESY WILL CONTAMINATE YOUR BLOOD!
...
...

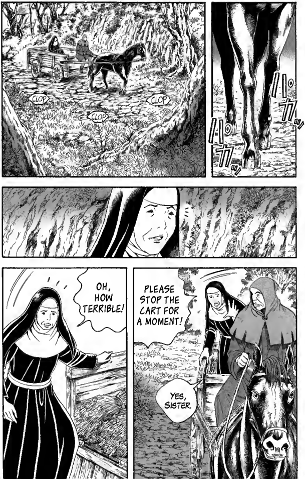

CLOP
CLOP
CLOP
CLOP
IT CAN'T BE!
IT CAN'T BE!
IT CAN'T BE!
IT CAN'T BE A REAL MIRACLE!
BUT... HOW CAN HE STILL BE ALIVE?
AND WHY CAN'T WE CATCH UP TO HIM?
WHY!?

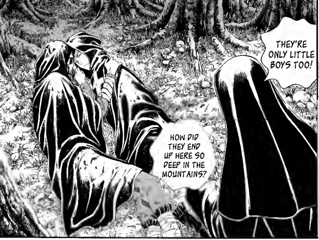

CAN IT BE...? THAT HE'S GOD'S...
NO, IT CAN'T BE...
ヒュウウウウ

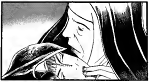

ヒュウウウ
How many days...
Has it been since we last ate?
5...?
No, 7...
Maybe I ought to become a thief again.
Form a band of child-thieves of my own...
Haha.
So even you know how to joke too.

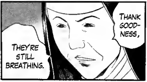

IT'S COLD...
ヒュウウウウ
Doubts that they would ever live to see Étienne again.
Grew larger and larger in their hearts

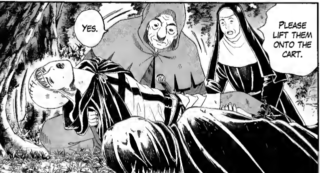

Chapter 24
Reunion

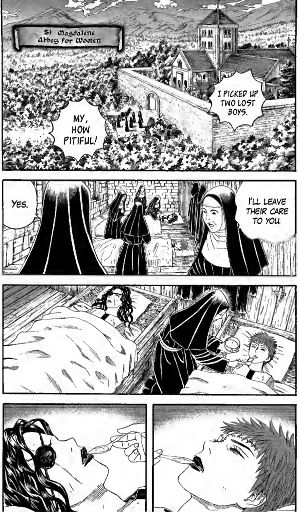

CLOP
CLOP
CLOP
パカッ
パカッ
OH, HOW TERRIBLE!
PLEASE STOP THE CART FOR A MOMENT!
YES, SISTER.

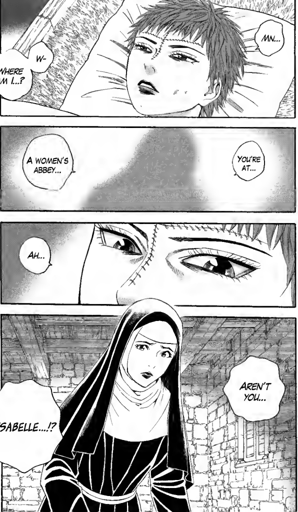

THEY'RE ONLY LITTLE BOYS TOO!
HOW DID THEY END UP HERE SO DEEP IN THE MOUNTAINS?

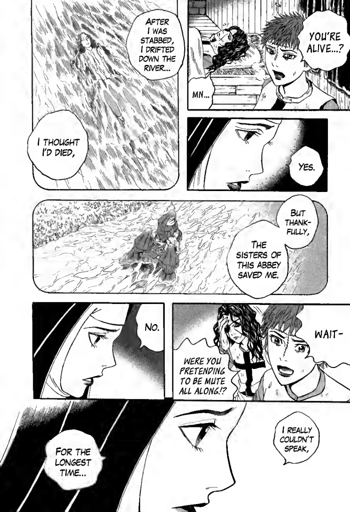


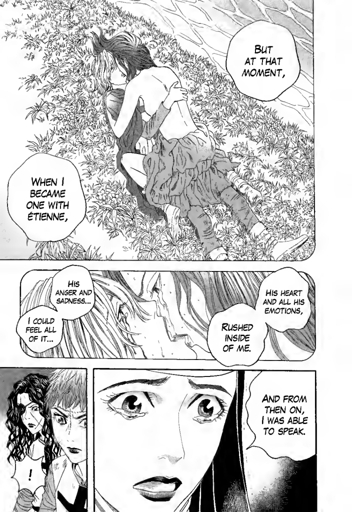

THANK GOOD-NESS,
THEY'RE STILL BREATHING.

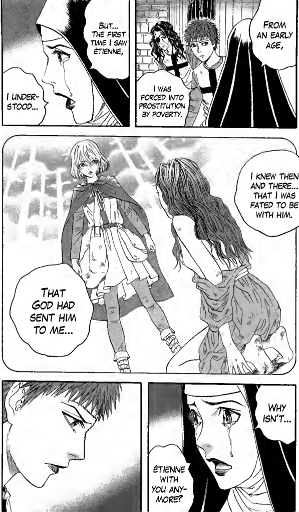

PLEASE LIFT THEM ONTO THE CART.
YES.

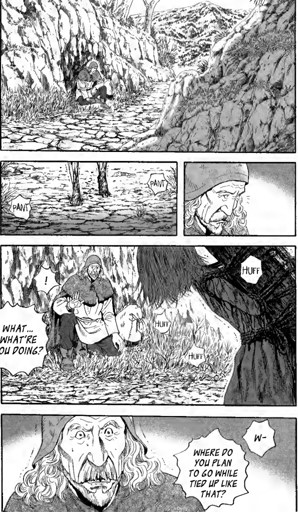

St Magdalene Abbey for Women
I PICKED UP TWO LOST BOYS.
MY, HOW PITIFUL!
I'LL LEAVE THEIR CARE TO YOU.
YES.

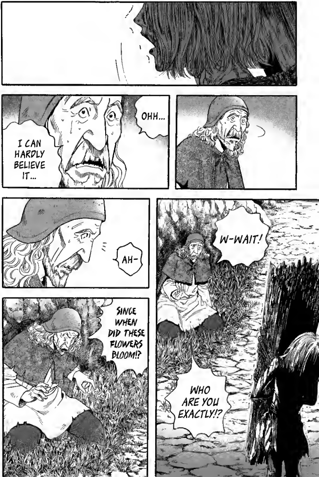

MN...
W-
WHERE AM I...?
YOU'RE AT...
A WOMEN'S ABBEY...
AH...
AREN'T YOU...
ISABELLE...!?

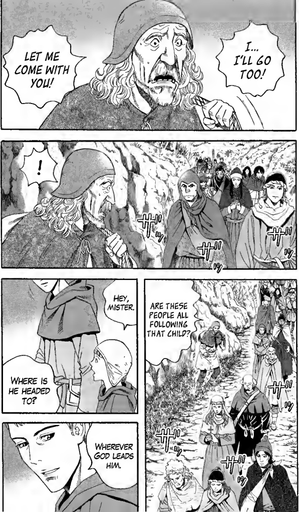

YOU'RE ALIVE...?
MN...
YES.
AFTER I WAS STABBED, I DRIFTED DOWN THE RIVER...
I THOUGHT I'D DIED,
BUT THANKFULLY,
THE SISTERS OF THIS ABBEY SAVED ME.
WAIT-
WERE YOU PRETENDING TO BE MUTE ALL ALONG!?
NO.
I REALLY COULDN'T SPEAK,
FOR THE LONGEST TIME...

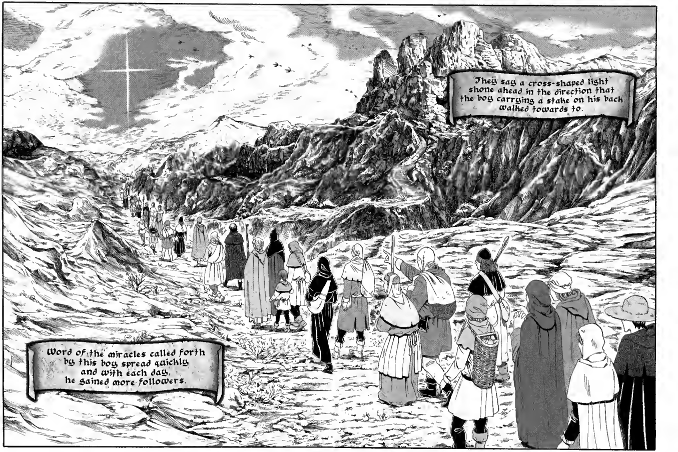

But at that moment,
When I became one with Étienne,
His heart and all his emotions,
Rushed inside of me.
His anger and sadness...
I could feel all of it...
And from then on, I was able to speak.
!

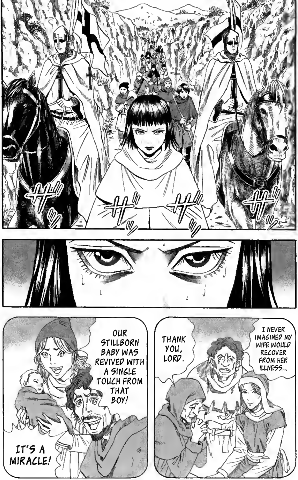

FROM AN EARLY AGE,
I WAS FORCED INTO PROSTITUTION BY POVERTY.
BUT... THE FIRST TIME I SAW ÉTIENNE,
I UNDERSTOOD...
I KNEW THEN AND THERE... THAT I WAS FATED TO BE WITH HIM.
THAT GOD HAD SENT HIM TO ME...
WHY ISN'T...
ÉTIENNE WITH YOU ANYMORE?

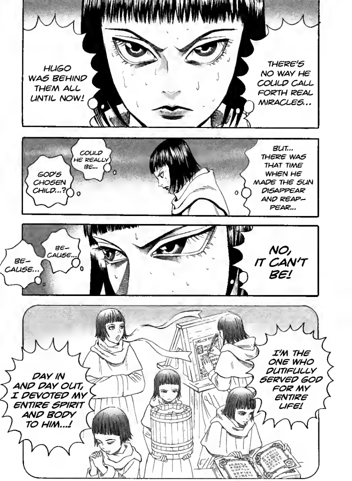

PANT
PANT
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
!
WHAT... WHAT'RE YOU DOING?
W-
WHERE DO YOU PLAN TO GO WHILE TIED UP LIKE THAT?

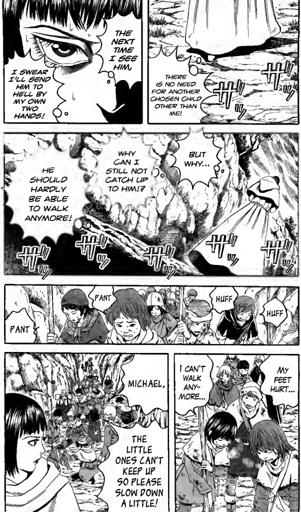

OHH...
I CAN HARDLY BELIEVE IT...
AH-
SINCE WHEN DID THESE FLOWERS BLOOM!?
W-WAIT!
WHO ARE YOU EXACTLY!?

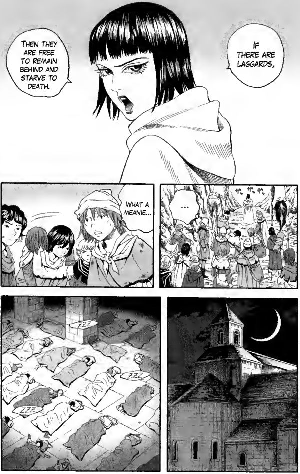

LET ME COME WITH YOU!
I... I'LL GO TOO!
!
ザッ
ザッ
ザッ
HEY, MISTER.
ARE THESE PEOPLE ALL FOLLOWING THAT CHILD?
WHERE IS HE HEADED TO?
ザッ
ザッ
ザッ
WHEREVER GOD LEADS HIM.

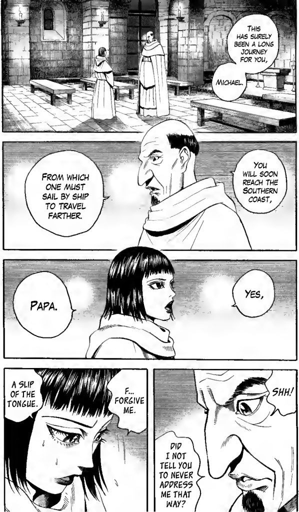

They say a cross-shaped light shone ahead in the direction that the boy carrying a stake on his back walked towards to.
Word of the miracles called forth by this boy spread quickly and with each day, he gained more followers.

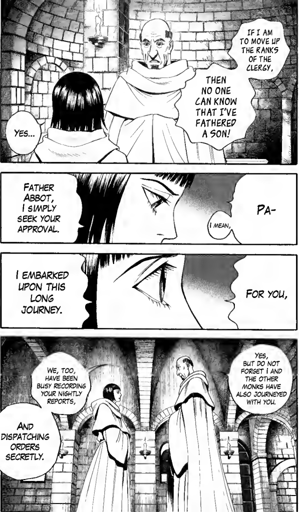

ザッ
ザッ
ザッ
ザッ
I NEVER IMAGINED MY WIFE WOULD RECOVER FROM HER ILLNESS...
THANK YOU, LORD.
OUR STILLBORN BABY WAS REVIVED WITH A SINGLE TOUCH FROM THAT BOY!
IT'S A MIRACLE!

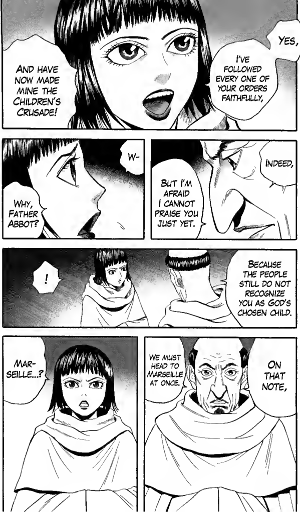

THERE'S NO WAY HE COULD CALL FORTH REAL MIRACLES...
HUGO WAS BEHIND THEM ALL UNTIL NOW!
BUT... THERE WAS THAT TIME WHEN HE MADE THE SUN DISAPPEAR AND REAPPEAR...
COULD HE REALLY BE...
GOD'S CHOSEN CHILD...?
NO, IT CAN'T BE!
BECAUSE...
BECAUSE...
I'M THE ONE WHO DUTIFULLY SERVED GOD FOR MY ENTIRE LIFE!
DAY IN AND DAY OUT, I DEVOTED MY ENTIRE SPIRIT AND BODY TO HIM...!

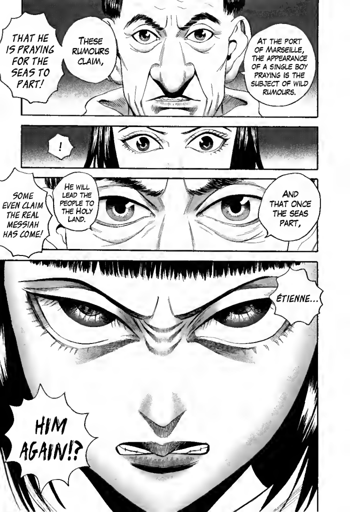

THERE IS NO NEED FOR ANOTHER CHOSEN CHILD OTHER THAN ME!
ザッ
ザッ
THE NEXT TIME I SEE HIM,
I SWEAR I'LL SEND HIM TO HELL BY MY OWN TWO HANDS!
BUT WHY...
WHY CAN I STILL NOT CATCH UP TO HIM!?
HE SHOULD HARDLY BE ABLE TO WALK ANYMORE!
ザッ
ザッ
ザッ
ザッ
ザッ
HUFF
HUFF
PANT
PANT
MY FEET HURT...
I CAN'T WALK ANY-MORE...
MICHAEL,
THE LITTLE ONES CAN'T KEEP UP SO PLEASE SLOW DOWN A LITTLE!

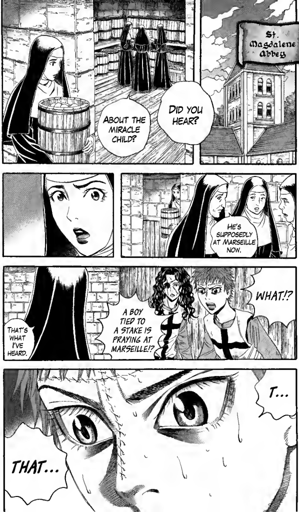

IF THERE ARE LAGGARDS,
THEN THEY ARE FREE TO REMAIN BEHIND AND STARVE TO DEATH.
...
WHAT A MEANIE...
ZZZ
ZZZ
ZZZ

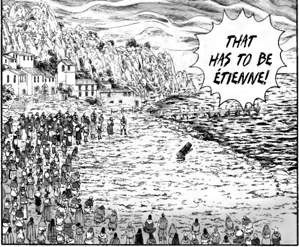

THIS HAS SURELY BEEN A LONG JOURNEY FOR YOU,
MICHAEL.
YOU WILL SOON REACH THE SOUTHERN COAST,
FROM WHICH ONE MUST SAIL BY SHIP TO TRAVEL FARTHER.
YES,
PAPA.
SHH!
DID I NOT TELL YOU TO NEVER ADDRESS ME THAT WAY?
F... FORGIVE ME.
A SLIP OF THE TONGUE.

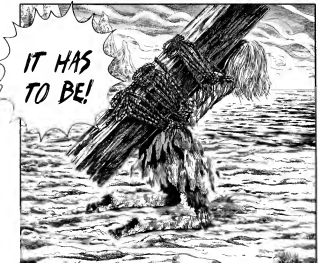

IF I AM TO MOVE UP THE RANKS OF THE CLERGY,
THEN NO ONE CAN KNOW THAT I'VE FATHERED A SON!
YES...
PA-
I MEAN,
FATHER ABBOT, I SIMPLY SEEK YOUR APPROVAL.
FOR YOU,
I EMBARKED UPON THIS LONG JOURNEY.
YES, BUT DO NOT FORGET I AND THE OTHER MONKS HAVE ALSO JOURNEYED WITH YOU.
WE, TOO, HAVE BEEN BUSY RECORDING YOUR NIGHTLY REPORTS,
AND DISPATCHING ORDERS SECRETLY.

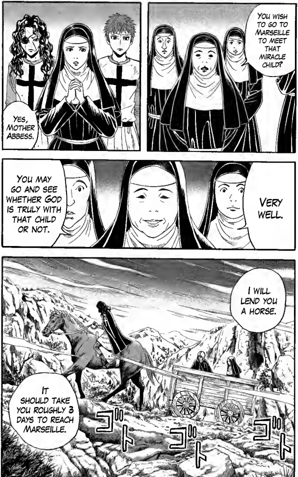

Yes,
I've followed every one of your orders faithfully,
And have now made mine the Children's Crusade!
Indeed,
But I'm afraid I cannot praise you just yet.
W-
Why, Father Abbot?
Because the people still do not recognize you as God's chosen child.
!
On that note,
We must head to Marseille at once.
Mar-seille...?


AT THE PORT OF MARSEILLE, THE APPEARANCE OF A SINGLE BOY PRAYING IS THE SUBJECT OF WILD RUMOURS.
THESE RUMOURS CLAIM,
THAT HE IS PRAYING FOR THE SEAS TO PART!
!
AND THAT ONCE THE SEAS PART,
HE WILL LEAD THE PEOPLE TO THE HOLY LAND.
SOME EVEN CLAIM THE REAL MESSIAH HAS COME!
ÉTIENNE...
HIM AGAIN!?


St. Magdalene Abbey
DID YOU HEAR?
ABOUT THE MIRACLE CHILD?
HE'S SUPPOSEDLY AT MARSEILLE NOW.
WHAT!?
A BOY TIED TO A STAKE IS PRAYING AT MARSEILLE!?
THAT'S WHAT I'VE HEARD.
T...
THAT...


THAT HAS TO BE ÉTIENNE!


IT HAS TO BE!


You wish to go to Marseille to meet that miracle child?
Yes, Mother Abbess.
Very well.
You may go and see whether God is truly with that child or not.
I will lend you a horse.
It should take you roughly 3 days to reach Marseille.
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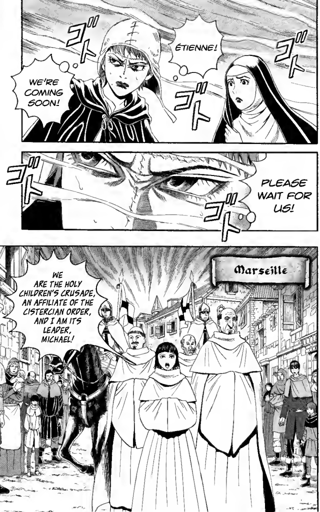
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ÉTIENNE!
WE'RE COMING SOON!
ゴト
ゴト
PLEASE WAIT FOR US!
ゴト
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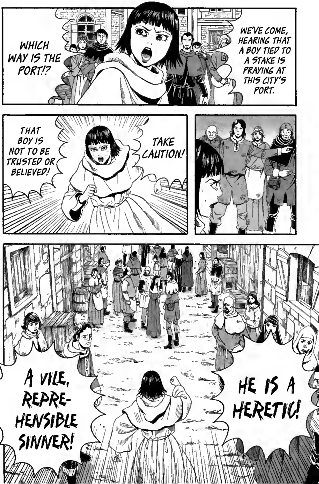
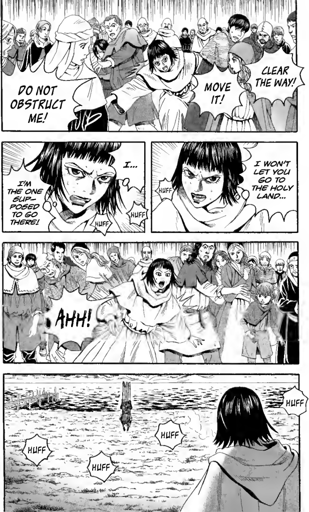
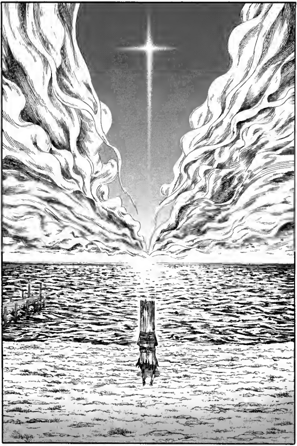
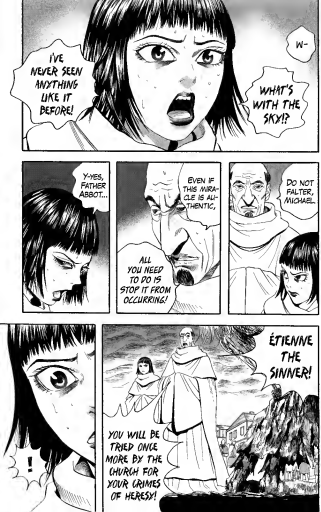
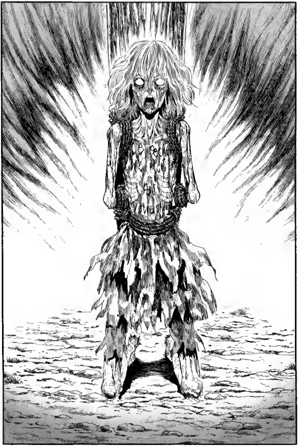
Marseille
WE ARE THE HOLY CHILDREN'S CRUSADE, AN AFFILIATE OF THE CISTERCIAN ORDER, AND I AM ITS LEADER, MICHAEL!

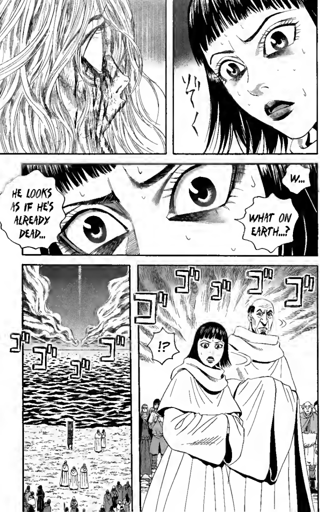

WE'VE COME, HEARING THAT A BOY TIED TO A STAKE IS PRAYING AT THIS CITY'S PORT.
WHICH WAY IS THE PORT!?
TAKE CAUTION!
THAT BOY IS NOT TO BE TRUSTED OR BELIEVED!
HE IS A HERETIC!
A VILE, REPREHENSIBLE SINNER!


CLEAR THE WAY!
MOVE IT!
DO NOT OBSTRUCT ME!
HUFF
I WON'T LET YOU GO TO THE HOLY LAND...
I...
I'M THE ONE SUPPOSED TO GO THERE!
HUFF
HUFF
AHH!
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF




W-
WHAT'S WITH THE SKY!?
I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT BEFORE!
DO NOT FALTER, MICHAEL.
EVEN IF THIS MIRACLE IS AUTHENTIC,
ALL YOU NEED TO DO IS STOP IT FROM OCCURRING!
Y-YES, FATHER ABBOT...
ÉTIENNE THE SINNER!
YOU WILL BE TRIED ONCE MORE BY THE CHURCH FOR YOUR CRIMES OF HERESY!
!

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W...
WHAT ON EARTH...?
HE LOOKS AS IF HE'S ALREADY DEAD...
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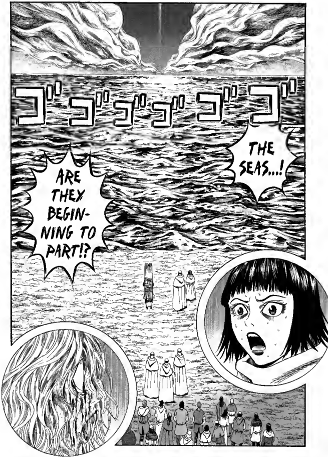
!?
ゴ ゴ ゴ ゴ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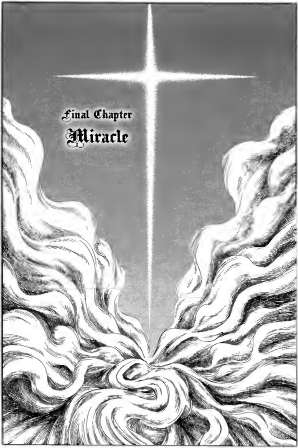
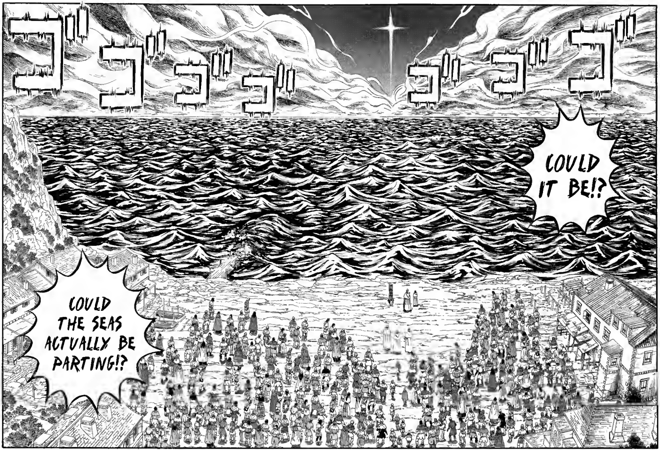
THE SEAS...!
ARE THEY BEGINNING TO PART!?

Final Chapter

Miracle

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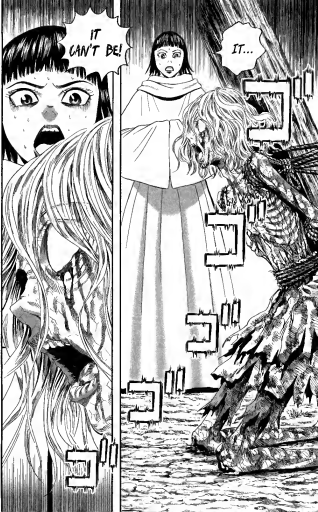
COULD IT BE!?
COULD THE SEAS ACTUALLY BE PARTING!?


IT...
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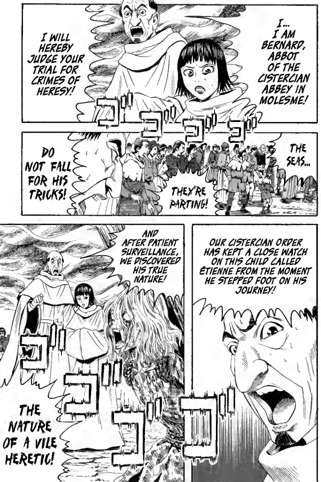
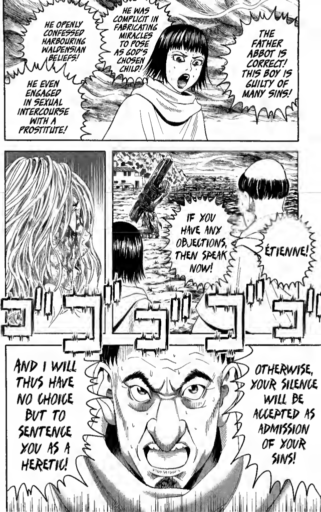
IT CAN'T BE!
ゴ


I... I AM BERNARD, ABBOT OF THE CISTERCIAN ABBEY IN MOLESME!
I WILL HEREBY JUDGE YOUR TRIAL FOR CRIMES OF HERESY!
ゴゴゴゴ
THE SEAS...
THEY'RE PARTING!
DO NOT FALL FOR HIS TRICKS!
OUR CISTERCIAN ORDER HAS KEPT A CLOSE WATCH ON THIS CHILD CALLED ÉTIENNE FROM THE MOMENT HE STEPPED FOOT ON HIS JOURNEY!
AND AFTER PATIENT SURVEILLANCE, WE DISCOVERED HIS TRUE NATURE!
THE NATURE OF A VILE HERETIC!
ゴゴゴゴ


THE FATHER ABBOT IS CORRECT! THIS BOY IS GUILTY OF MANY SINS!
HE WAS COMPLICIT IN FABRICATING MIRACLES TO POSE AS GOD'S CHOSEN CHILD!
HE OPENLY CONFESSED HARBOURING WALDENSIAN BELIEFS!
HE EVEN ENGAGED IN SEXUAL INTERCOURSE WITH A PROSTITUTE!
ÉTIENNE!
IF YOU HAVE ANY OBJECTIONS, THEN SPEAK NOW!
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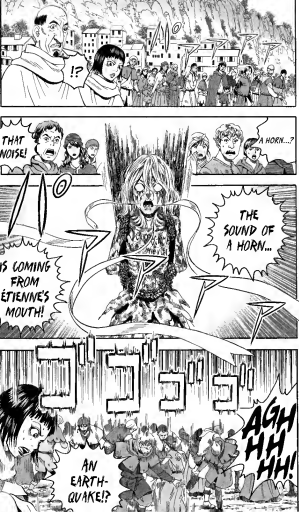
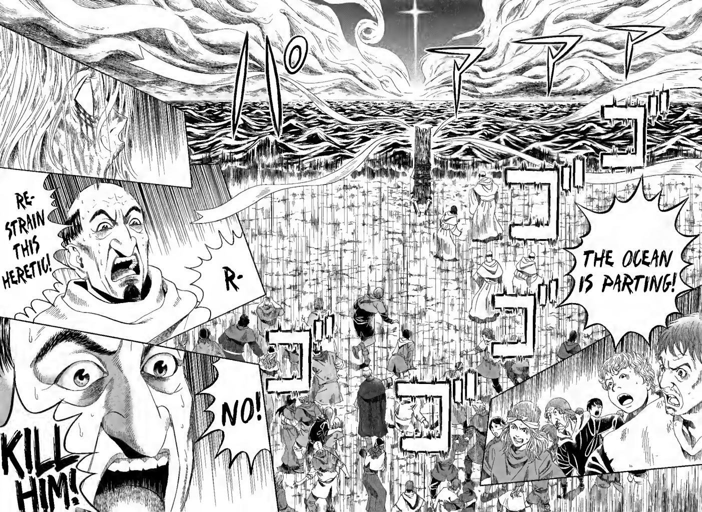
OTHERWISE, YOUR SILENCE WILL BE ACCEPTED AS ADMISSION OF YOUR SINS!
AND I WILL THUS HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO SENTENCE YOU AS A HERETIC!


パアアアア
!?
A HORN...?
THAT NOISE!
パアアアアア
THE SOUND OF A HORN...
IS COMING FROM ÉTIENNE'S MOUTH!
ゴゴゴゴ
AGHHHHHH!
AN EARTH-QUAKE!?


パァァァ
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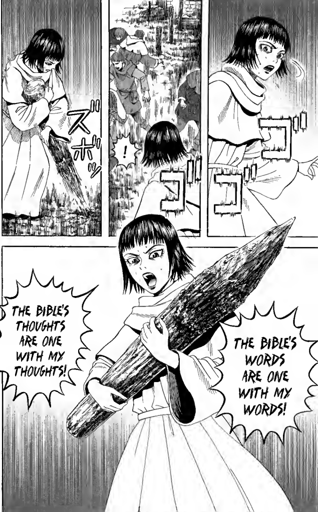
THE OCEAN IS PARTING!
R-
RE-STRAIN THIS HERETIC!
NO!
KILL HIM!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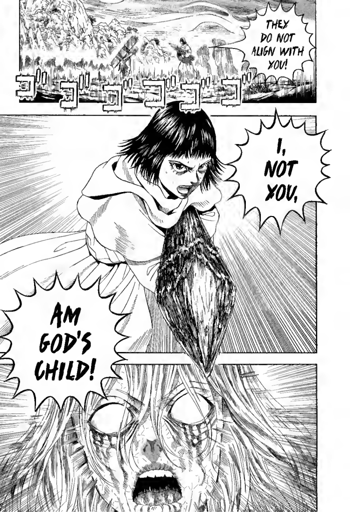
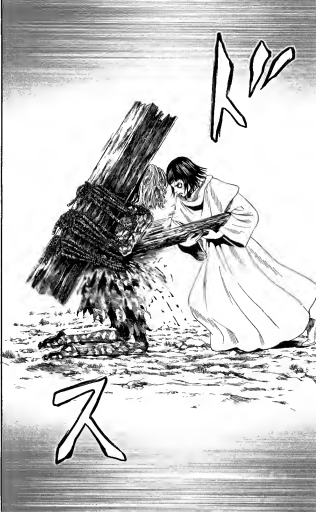
ズボッ
THE BIBLE'S WORDS ARE ONE WITH MY WORDS!
THE BIBLE'S THOUGHTS ARE ONE WITH MY THOUGHTS!


THEY DO NOT ALIGN WITH YOU!
ゴゴゴゴゴゴ
I, NOT YOU,
AM GOD'S CHILD!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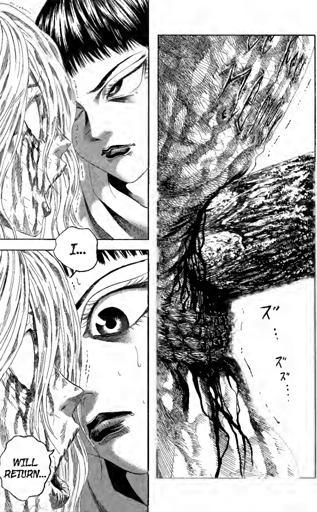
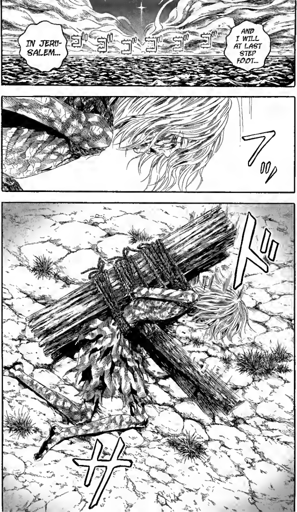

ズ…
ズズ…
I...
WILL RETURN...


AND I WILL AT LAST STEP FOOT...
IN JERUSALEM...
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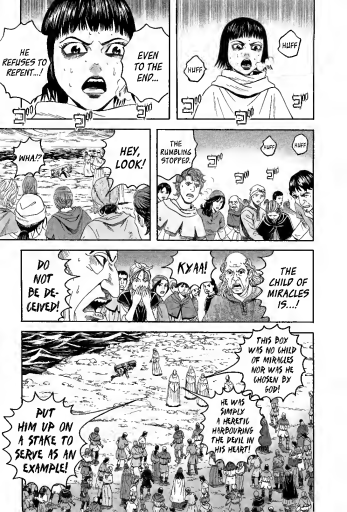
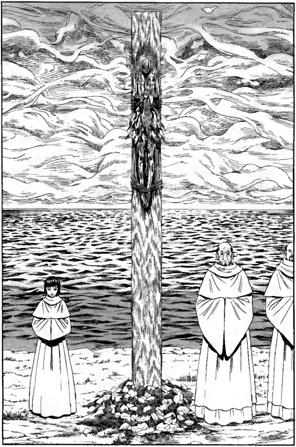
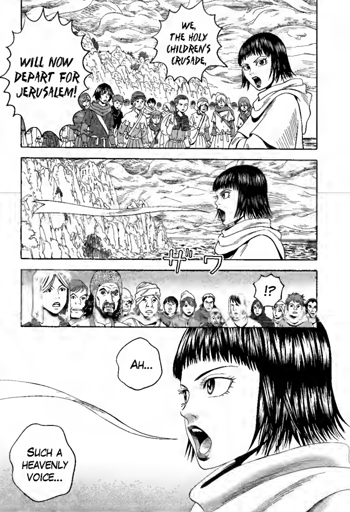
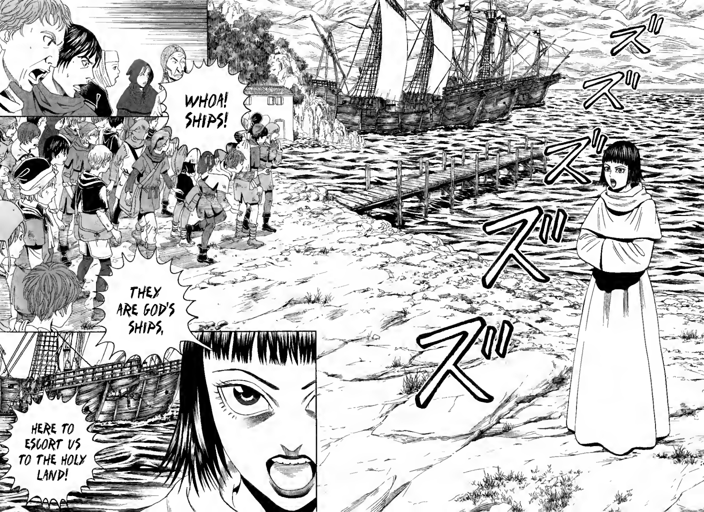
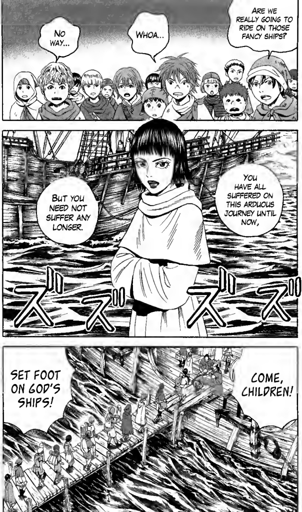
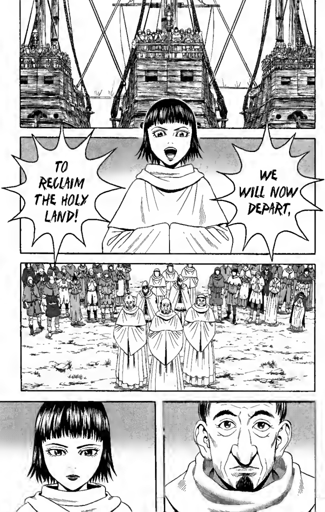

HUFF
HUFF
HE REFUSES TO REPENT...!
EVEN TO THE END...
THE RUMBLING STOPPED.
HUFF
HUFF
HEY, LOOK!
WHA!?
THE CHILD OF MIRACLES IS...!
KYAA!
DO NOT BE DECEIVED!
THIS BOY WAS NO CHILD OF MIRACLES NOR WAS HE CHOSEN BY GOD!
HE WAS SIMPLY A HERETIC HARBOURING THE DEVIL IN HIS HEART!
PUT HIM UP ON A STAKE TO SERVE AS AN EXAMPLE!

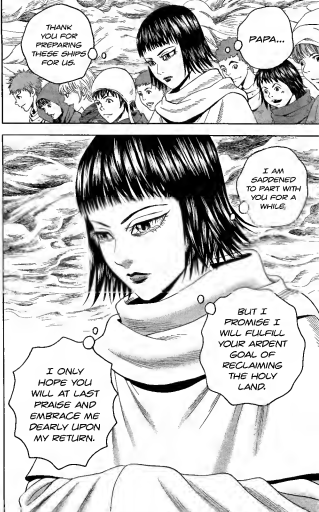


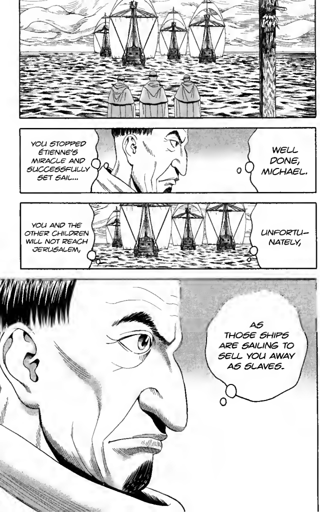

WE, THE HOLY CHILDREN'S CRUSADE,
WILL NOW DEPART FOR JERUSALEM!
ザワ
!?
AH...
SUCH A HEAVENLY VOICE...

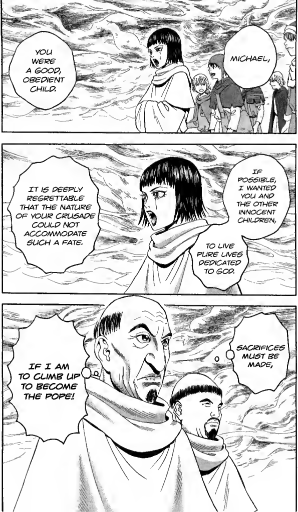

ズズズズズ
WHOA! SHIPS!
THEY ARE GOD'S SHIPS,
HERE TO ESCORT US TO THE HOLY LAND!

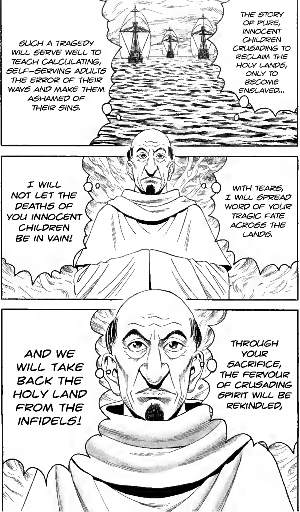

ARE WE REALLY GOING TO RIDE ON THOSE FANCY SHIPS?
WHOA...
NO WAY...
YOU HAVE ALL SUFFERED ON THIS ARDUOUS JOURNEY UNTIL NOW,
BUT YOU NEED NOT SUFFER ANY LONGER.
ズズズズ
COME, CHILDREN!
SET FOOT ON GOD'S SHIPS!

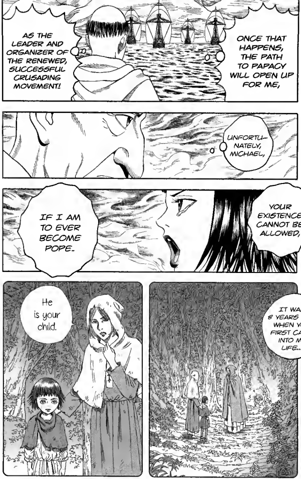

WE WILL NOW DEPART,
TO RECLAIM THE HOLY LAND!

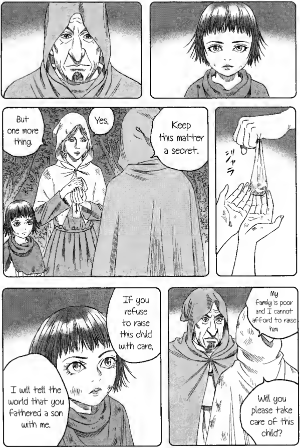

PAPA...
THANK YOU FOR PREPARING THESE SHIPS FOR US.
I AM SADDENED TO PART WITH YOU FOR A WHILE.
BUT I PROMISE I WILL FULFILL YOUR ARDENT GOAL OF RECLAIMING THE HOLY LAND.
I ONLY HOPE YOU WILL AT LAST PRAISE AND EMBRACE ME DEARLY UPON MY RETURN.

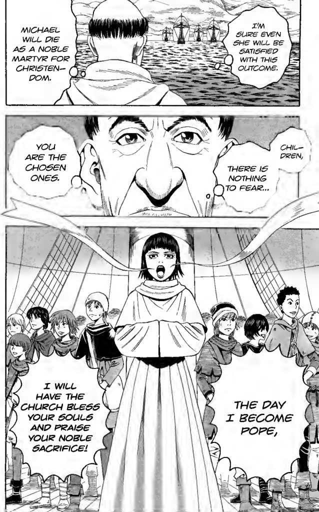

WELL DONE, MICHAEL.
YOU STOPPED ÉTIENNE'S MIRACLE AND SUCCESSFULLY SET SAIL...
UNFORTUNATELY,
YOU AND THE OTHER CHILDREN WILL NOT REACH JERUSALEM,
AS THOSE SHIPS ARE SAILING TO SELL YOU AWAY AS SLAVES.

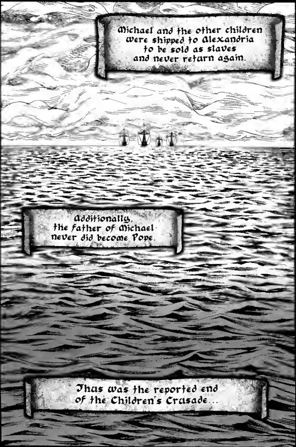

MICHAEL,
YOU WERE A GOOD, OBEDIENT CHILD.
IF POSSIBLE, I WANTED YOU AND THE OTHER INNOCENT CHILDREN,
TO LIVE PURE LIVES DEDICATED TO GOD.
IT IS DEEPLY REGRETTABLE THAT THE NATURE OF YOUR CRUSADE COULD NOT ACCOMMODATE SUCH A FATE.
SACRIFICES MUST BE MADE,
IF I AM TO CLIMB UP TO BECOME THE POPE!

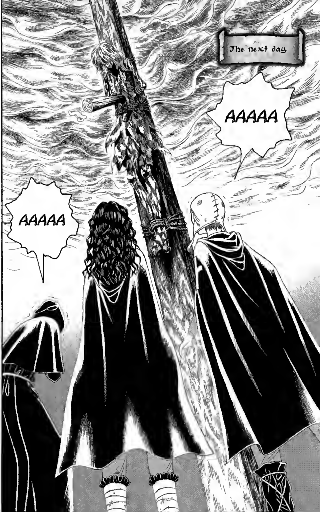

THE STORY OF PURE, INNOCENT CHILDREN CRUSADING TO RECLAIM THE HOLY LANDS, ONLY TO BECOME ENSLAVED...
SUCH A TRAGEDY WILL SERVE WELL TO TEACH CALCULATING, SELF-SERVING ADULTS THE ERROR OF THEIR WAYS AND MAKE THEM ASHAMED OF THEIR SINS.
WITH TEARS, I WILL SPREAD WORD OF YOUR TRAGIC FATE ACROSS THE LANDS.
I WILL NOT LET THE DEATHS OF YOU INNOCENT CHILDREN BE IN VAIN!
THROUGH YOUR SACRIFICE, THE FERVOUR OF CRUSADING SPIRIT WILL BE REKINDLED,
AND WE WILL TAKE BACK THE HOLY LAND FROM THE INFIDELS!

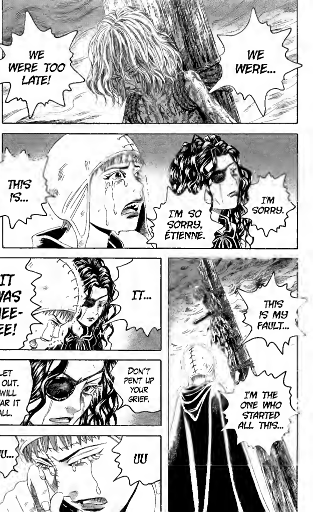

ONCE THAT HAPPENS, THE PATH TO PAPACY WILL OPEN UP FOR ME,
AS THE LEADER AND ORGANIZER OF THE RENEWED, SUCCESSFUL CRUSADING MOVEMENT!
UNFORTUNATELY, MICHAEL,
YOUR EXISTENCE CANNOT BE ALLOWED,
IF I AM TO EVER BECOME POPE.
IT WAS 8 YEARS AGO WHEN YOU FIRST CAME INTO MY LIFE...
He is your child.

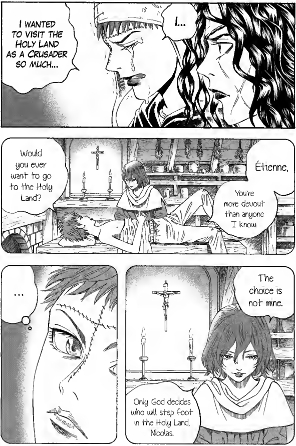

ジャラ
Keep this matter a secret.
Yes,
But one more thing.
My family is poor and I cannot afford to raise him
Will you please take care of this child?
If you refuse to raise this child with care,
I will tell the world that you fathered a son with me.

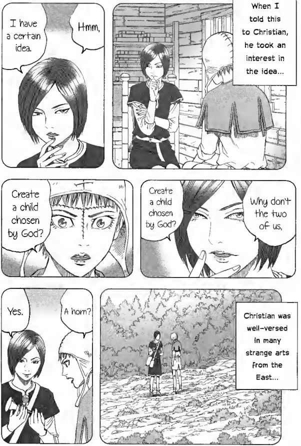

I'M SURE EVEN SHE WILL BE SATISFIED WITH THIS OUTCOME.
MICHAEL WILL DIE AS A NOBLE MARTYR FOR CHRISTENDOM.
CHILDREN,
THERE IS NOTHING TO FEAR...
YOU ARE THE CHOSEN ONES.
THE DAY I BECOME POPE,
I WILL HAVE THE CHURCH BLESS YOUR SOULS AND PRAISE YOUR NOBLE SACRIFICE!

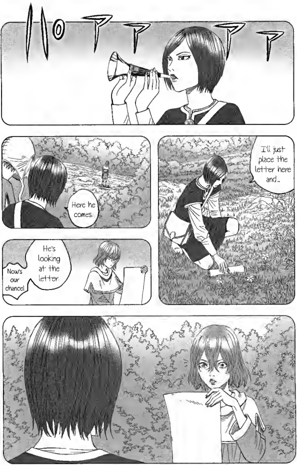

Michael and the other children were shipped to Alexandria to be sold as slaves and never return again.
Additionally, the father of Michael never did become Pope.
Thus was the reported end of the Children's Crusade...

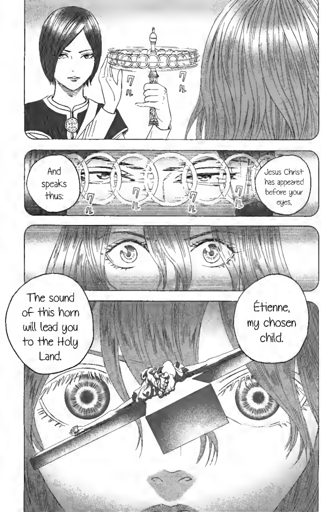

The next day
AAAAA
AAAAA


WE WERE...
WE WERE TOO LATE!
I'M SORRY.
I'M SO SORRY, ÉTIENNE.
THIS IS...
THIS IS MY FAULT...
I'M THE ONE WHO STARTED ALL THIS...
IT...
IT WAS MEEE-EE!
DON'T PENT UP YOUR GRIEF.
LET IT OUT. I WILL HEAR IT ALL.
UU
UUU...


I...
I WANTED TO VISIT THE HOLY LAND AS A CRUSADER SO MUCH...
Étienne,
You're more devout than anyone I know
Would you ever want to go to the Holy Land?
The choice is not mine.
Only God decides who will step foot in the Holy Land, Nicolas.
...


When I told this to Christian, he took an interest in the idea...
Hmm,
I have a certain idea.
Why don't the two of us,
Create a child chosen by God?
Create a child chosen by God?
Christian was well-versed in many strange arts from the East...
A horn?
Yes.


パアアアア
I'll just place the letter here and..
Here he comes.
He's looking at the letter
Now's our chance!


クル
クル
Jesus Christ has appeared before your eyes,
And speaks thus:
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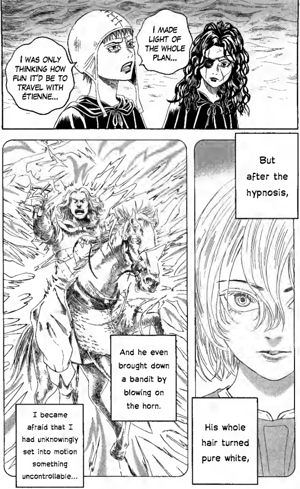
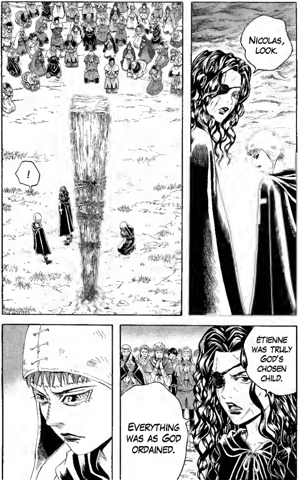
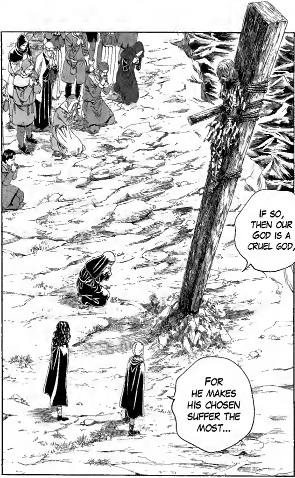
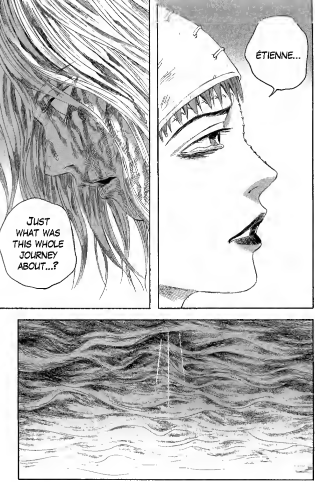
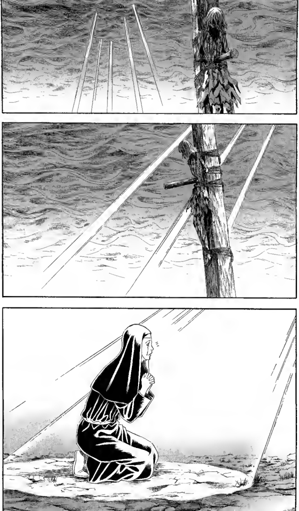
Étienne, my chosen child.
The sound of this horn will lead you to the Holy Land.

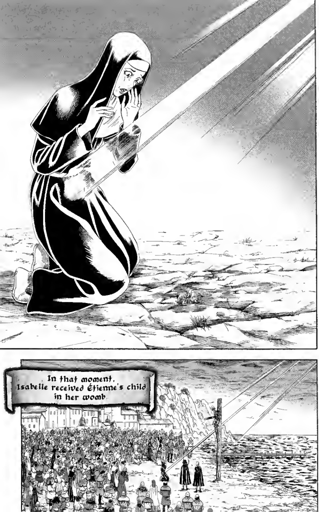

I MADE LIGHT OF THE WHOLE PLAN...
I WAS ONLY THINKING HOW FUN IT'D BE TO TRAVEL WITH ÉTIENNE...
But after the hypnosis,
His whole hair turned pure white,
And he even brought down a bandit by blowing on the horn.
I became afraid that I had unknowingly set into motion something uncontrollable...

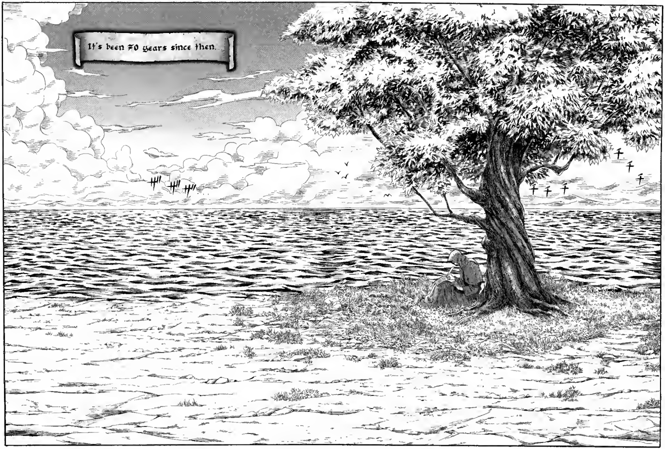

NICOLAS, LOOK.
!
ÉTIENNE WAS TRULY GOD'S CHOSEN CHILD.
EVERYTHING WAS AS GOD ORDAINED.

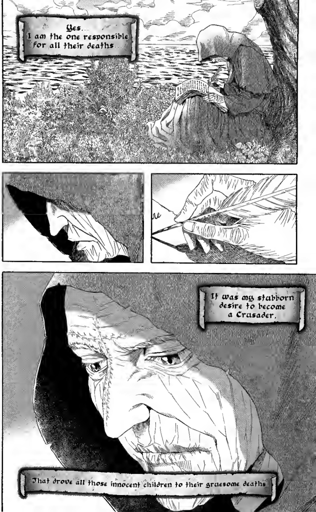

IF SO, THEN OUR GOD IS A CRUEL GOD,
FOR HE MAKES HIS CHOSEN SUFFER THE MOST...

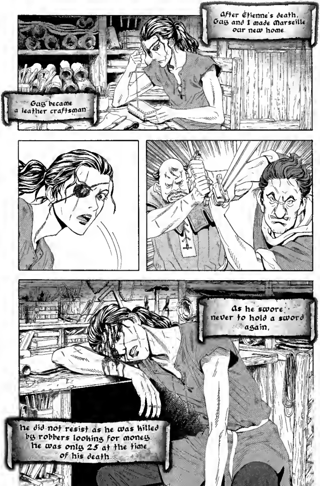

ÉTIENNE...
JUST WHAT WAS THIS WHOLE JOURNEY ABOUT...?

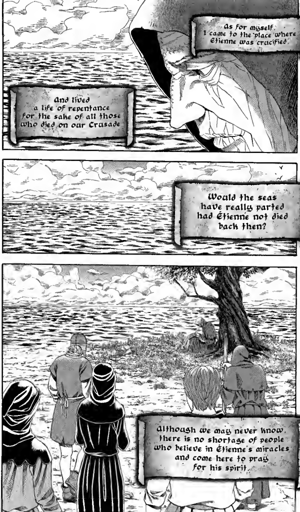


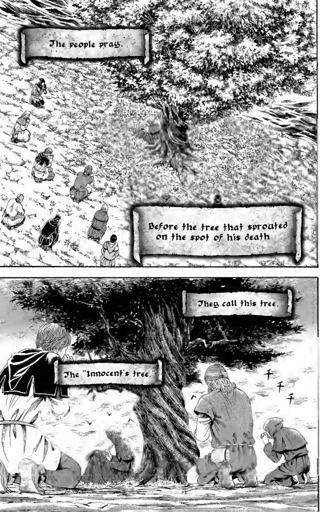

In that moment,
Isabelle received Étienne's child
in her womb.


It's been 70 years since then.


Yes...
I am the one responsible for all their deaths...
It was my stubborn desire to become a Crusader,
That drove all those innocent children to their gruesome deaths


After Étienne's death, Guy and I made Marseille our new home.
Guy became a leather craftsman
As he swore never to hold a sword again,
he did not resist as he was killed by robbers looking for money. He was only 25 at the time of his death.


As for myself I came to the place where Étienne was crucified
And lived a life of repentance for the sake of all those who died on our Crusade
Would the seas have really parted had Étienne not died back then?
Although we may never know, there is no shortage of people who believe in Étienne's miracles and come here to pray for his spirit.


The people pray.
Before the tree that sprouted on the spot of his death.
They call this tree.
The "Innocent's tree."
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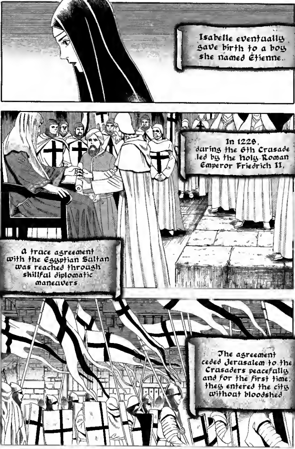
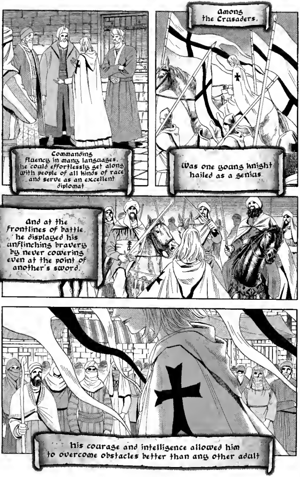
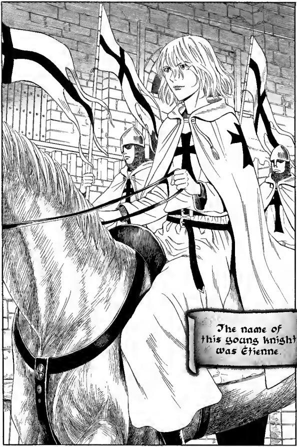
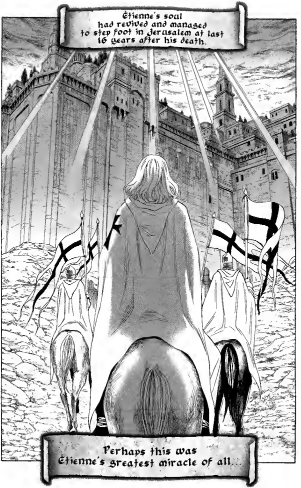
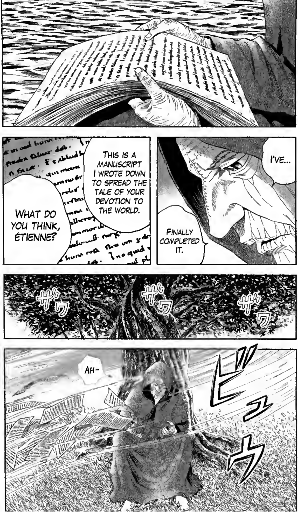
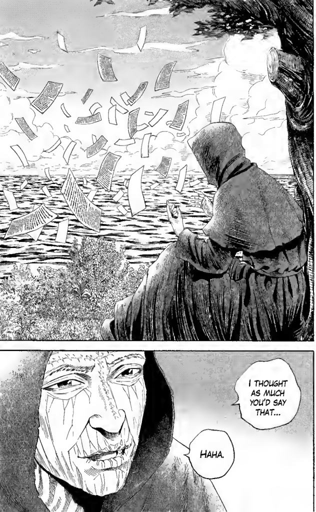

Isabelle eventually gave birth to a boy she named Étienne.
In 1228, during the 6th Crusade led by the Holy Roman Emperor Friedrich II,
A truce agreement with the Egyptian Sultan was reached through skillful diplomatic maneuvers.
The agreement ceded Jerusalem to the Crusaders peacefully and for the first time, they entered the city without bloodshed.

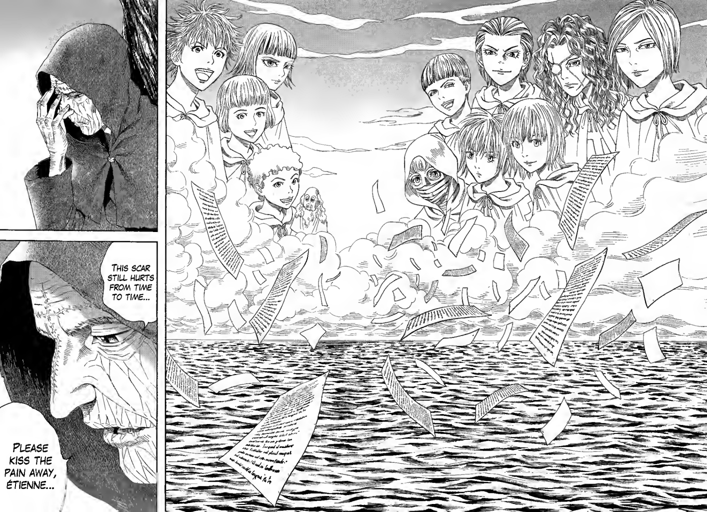

Commanding fluency in many languages, he could effortlessly get along with people of all kinds of race and serve as an excellent diplomat
among the Crusaders,
was one young knight hailed as a genius
And at the frontlines of battle, he displayed his unflinching bravery by never cowering even at the point of another's sword.
his courage and intelligence allowed him to overcome obstacles better than any other adult

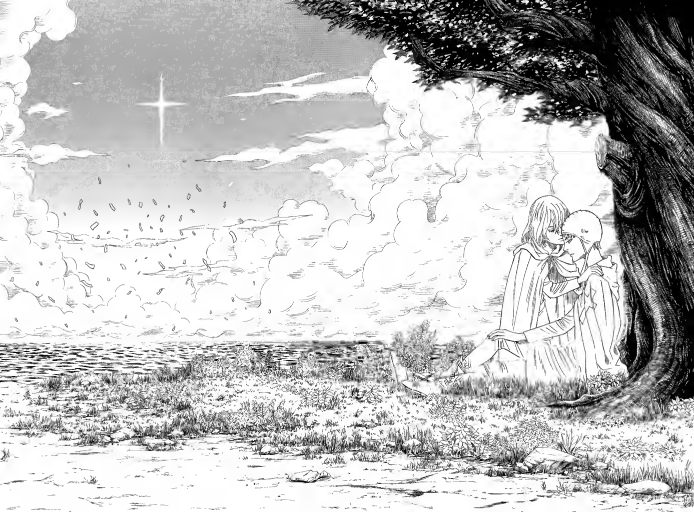

The name of this young knight was Étienne.


Étienne's soul had revived and managed to step foot in Jerusalem at last 16 years after his death.
Perhaps this was Étienne's greatest miracle of all...


I'VE...
FINALLY COMPLETED IT.
THIS IS A MANUSCRIPT I WROTE DOWN TO SPREAD THE TALE OF YOUR DEVOTION TO THE WORLD.
WHAT DO YOU THINK, ÉTIENNE?
ザワ
ザワ
ザワ
ビュウ
AH-


I THOUGHT AS MUCH YOU'D SAY THAT...
HAHA.


This scar still hurts from time to time...
Please kiss the pain away, Étienne...



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Afterword

Many readers have questioned, "Just how historically accurate is this story?"

Although scholars are not confident about many of the purported aspects of the Children's Crusade, there are a few points which have received broad support. One, is the fact that the Children's Crusade likely included many commoners, both young and old. Later historical chroniclers chose to depict them as a crusade composed entirely of children and led by a child who received divine instructions from God in order to dramatize the story. Complicating the truth of this matter is that poor commoners were often called "boys" as a form of derision, which may have led to false impressions for historical chroniclers. Another point of doubt is the starting year for the Children's Crusade, 1212 AD, which may have simply been chosen to emphasize its divine overtones, as Christ had 12 disciples.

In any case, the most commonly told version of the Children's Crusade goes thus:

In 1212 at the French town of Cloyes, a shepherd named Étienne claimed to receive a command from God and called for a crusade of children. His following soon grew to number tens of thousands of children. However, while on their way to the Holy Land, they were betrayed by the merchants who promised to ferry them by boat and were sold as slaves in Alexandria.

I've been captivated by this story ever since watching a 1-hour special for it on the history channel around 10 years ago. A story in which pure children were tricked by adults and sold as slaves, highlighting their weak and defenseless status in a cruel medieval world…

Although the incident is hard for us in the modern-day to even imagine, I should point out that medieval children were not like the coddled children of today. Society thought of them as already half-adults and regularly treated them as such. Many of those children would have wished to become adults as quickly as possible, so it's not strange that some would have willingly joined a crusade.

In my story, I simply took the above version and added the elements of the Knights Templar, who were historically important moneylenders, and the conflict between orthodoxy and heterodoxy to create the kind of story (perhaps my specialty?) where the inexperienced make classic mistakes of youth and deal with friction among their group members along their path to ruin.

Concerning the fictional characters, I used Remy, Lilian, Laurent, and Christian to depict the prevailing discrimination against lepers, twins, and homosexuals in the medieval world. Meanwhile, the conflict between Guillaume and Nicolas was used to highlight the difference in station for the rich and poor. Lastly, Guy was used to represent the prominent banditry element of that time.

Thus, in response to the question, "Just how historically accurate is this story," I have to confess that it's mostly the product of my imagination, but I hope I managed to at least somewhat honestly portray the suffering and hypocrisy of the medieval world.

Lastly, I'd like to thank my editors Kamimura and Noguchi for patiently sticking with me during the long serialization, as well as chutte-san for the amazing binding and print work. Much thanks also goes out to Matsuki Yasunori for advising me on the historical realities in this work and to all of my assistants who helped me out with the backgrounds.

Last but not least, I thank all you readers who also patiently waited all throughout the serialization.

It feels like a small miracle that after exactly 800 years since Étienne and the children set out on their crusade, the final volume is released.

Jan. 1, 2012
Furuya Usamaru

Usamaru Furuya

La Croisade des Innocents

Translation: Hox
Editing: Kennit

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工場の煙に覆われた螢光町の片隅にある、
「光クラブ」と名づけられた少年たちの秘密基地。
無邪気な遊び場か、
残虐な物語の舞台へと変貌したのは何故なのか──。

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廃墟の帝王
ゼ★ラ
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デンタク
忠誠の騎士
ニコ
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（主宰・飴屋法水）
二十年のときを経てふたたび幕を開ける、
美しき少年たちの残酷なる舞台。
ロングベストセラー！！

インノサン少年十字軍　下

2012年3月2日　第1刷発行

著者＝古屋兎丸

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